

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

MAY, 1999

**What If We
LIVED
By The Bible?**

The Challenges and Thrills of Preaching

“We should be praying that God will raise up a new generation of Christian communicators who struggle to relate God’s unchanging Word to our ever-changing world; who refuse to sacrifice truth to relevance or relevance to truth.”

* * *

“We [preachers] must boldly handle the major themes of human life, the incessant questions which men and women have always asked...: What is the purpose of our existence? Has life any significance? Where did I come from, and where am I going to?...Whence [our] thirst for transcendence, this universal quest for a Reality above and beyond us, this need to fall down and worship the Infinitely Great?

“How can I experience personal liberation? Why the painful tension between what I am and what I long to be? Is there a way to be rid of guilt and of a guilty conscience?...Is it possible truly to master oneself and love one’s neighbour? Is there any light on the dark mysteries of evil and suffering? How can we find courage to face first life, then death, then what may lie beyond death? What hope can sustain us in the midst of our despair?”

* * *

“One of the most fascinating of all the preacher’s tasks is to explore both the

emptiness of fallen man and the fullness of Jesus Christ, in order then to demonstrate how He can fill our emptiness, lighten our darkness, enrich our poverty, and bring our human aspirations to fulfilment. The riches of Christ are unfathomable. (Eph. 3:8, NEB)”

--John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds*

(see book review in this issue)

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, New & Notes

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Theme:

What if we Lived by the Bible?

Alex V. Wilson

I remember, decades ago, reading an impressive article about a unique village. It was on an island of Japan. When our troops discovered it during the second world war, they were flabbergasted. Why? Because it tried to live by the Bible. Read about it in the next article.

In this issue we dream about what would happen if not only individuals but families, churches, and towns tried to live by the Bible. What if entire cities, states and even...Why did you interrupt me? Oh, "Impossible," you say? Of course, but...well, at least it's fun to imagine.

So let's dream about moms and infants and adoptive parents. About strangers stranded on the roadside by a flat tire. About parents whose conduct matches what they teach their teenagers. About colleges that uphold God's good absolutes. About preachers who help us apply God's standards to complex issues of life and society. About Jesus' cross and how it impels us to love and reach the whole world of people He died for. About being humble enough to profit from our failures. About folks whose lives and words are brimful of encouragement. Ahhh, what lovely dreams.

But Reality beckons. Actually many of the following articles are about failing to live in those wholesome ways. So with a sigh we read, and wish and yearn, and pray, "Lord, come quickly!" But till then, there's work to do, truth to share, love to extend, lessons to learn, preparations to make.

This issue also has two articles especially for preachers. If your preacher does not get W&W, share your copy with him. (And urge him to subscribe!) May we read and dream and trust and toil, as we seek to live by the Bible.

THE VILLAGE THAT LIVED BY THE BIBLE

Clarence W. Hall, former editor of Reader's Digest

I can never think of the boons and benefits the Bible invariably brings without thinking of Shimabuku, a tiny little village I came upon when, as a war correspondent, I was following on the heels of our troops beating out their tough and bloody victory on Okinawa.

It was an obscure little community of only a few hundred native Okinawans. Thirty years before, an American missionary on his way to Japan had stopped here. He hadn't stayed long—just long enough to make a couple of converts, leave them a Bible and then pass on.

One of the converts was Shosei Kina, the other was his brother Mojon. From the time of the missionary's visit, mind you, they had seen no other missionary, had no contact with any other Christian person or group. But in those thirty years Shosei Kina and his brother Mojon had made the Bible come alive. Picking their way through its pages, they had found not only an inspiring Person on whom to pattern a life, but sound precepts on which to base a society.

Aflame with their discovery, they taught the other villagers until every man, woman and child in Shimabuku was a Christian. Shosei Kina became head man in the village; his brother Mojon, the chief teacher. In Mojon's school the Bible was read daily. To Shosei Kina's village government, its precepts were law. Under the impact of this Book pagan things had fallen away. In their place, during these thirty years, there had developed a Christian democracy at its purest.

Then after thirty years came the American Army, storming across the island. Little Shimabuku was directly in their path and took some severe shelling. When our advance patrols swept up to the village compound, the GI's, their guns leveled, stopped dead in their tracks as two little old men stepped forth, bowed low and began to speak.

An interpreter explained that the old men were welcoming them as fellow Christians. They remembered that their missionary had come from America. So, though these Americans seemed to approach things a little differently than had the missionary, the two old men were overjoyed to see them.

The GI's reaction was typical. Flabbergasted, they sent for the chaplain.

The chaplain came, and with him officers of the Intelligence Service. They toured the village and were astounded at what they saw—the spotlessly clean homes and streets, the poise and gentility of the villagers, the high level of health and happiness, intelligence and prosperity of Shimabuku. They had seen many other villages on Okinawa — villages of unbelievable poverty and ignorance and filth. Against these Shimabuku shone like a diamond in a dung heap.

Shosei Kina and his brother Mojon observed the Americans amazement and took it for disappointment. They bowed humbly and said: "We are sorry if we seem a backward people. We have, honored sirs, tried our best to follow the Bible and live like Jesus. Perhaps if you will show us how . . ." Show *them*?

I strolled through Shimabuku one day with a tough old Army sergeant. As we walked he turned to me and whispered hoarsely, "I can't figure it, fellow—this kind of people coming out of only a Bible and a couple of old guys who wanted to live like Jesus!" Then he added what was to me an infinitely penetrating observation: "Maybe we've been using the wrong kind of weapons to make the world over!"

Whenever I think of what's wrong with our world, and of all that must be made right if civilization is to survive, I can't help thinking of little Shimabuku, of Shosei Kina and his brother Mojon. Nor can I help thinking of that Book that started it all, and of the Bible Societies, which are struggling to meet the mounting demand for the Scriptures — a demand that is increasing from freedom-hungry people all across the world.

I can't help relating Shimabuku and the Bible Societies, for I held the Book in my own hands for a few memorable moments. At my request Shosei Kina reverently took it down from the pedestal where it rested, handling it with the loving care one would use with the original of our own Declaration of Independence. It was weather-stained and frayed. Its covers were almost off, its edges dogeared from thirty years' use. Carefully I turned its pages. I couldn't read a word of it, of course. But I could read the inscription on the flyleaf. It said: "Published and distributed by the American Bible Society, New York."

This textbook of freedom had made a new little world of Shimabuku.

Given proper distribution, may it not make a big new world of liberty and peace for all?

THE LUCKY ONES ON MOTHER'S DAY

Mary Alan Woodward

(Ms. Woodward is a freelance writer and editor based in Louisville.)

Angelica Evergreen's mother didn't give her that name. Or anything else, for that matter, except a dirty duffel bag to die in.

Her mom, whoever she was, left it up to strangers to find her baby lying on a New York City sidewalk a few weeks ago. The tiny girl lived for just an hour, struggling to breathe the cold night air. It was left up to two policewomen to give her a name (Angelica "because she looked like an angel," one of the cops said, and Evergreen because her corpse was found on Evergreen Avenue). It was left up to the Police department to take up a collection to buy her a decent funeral and to a cemetery to donate a few feet of earth so she wouldn't be just a number in the city's "potter's field."

From the compassion shown by so many people whose lives touched Angelica's death, it's clear that someone would have wanted to give her so much more than a decent send off. Someone would have loved to give her a life. Whatever fears or frustrations her mother felt--and she may have faced terrible pressures--there were people and places she could have turned to for help with her troubles.

Indeed, many an impending birth seems like a time for despair. Not long ago, for example, a husband phoned Dr. Laura Schlessinger's syndicated radio talk show to confess that he and his wife were considering aborting their child because he or she might have Down Syndrome. Within a few minutes after the call, however, "Dr. Laura" announced that more than a dozen people had called in, eager to adopt. They saw the child's life not as a tragedy but as a chance for them to share their love.

The archetype of a loving mother has, for the past two and a half millennia, been one of the three adults in the Bible's "Wisdom of Solomon" story. In essence, the book of I Kings records that two prostitutes once petitioned King Solomon, each claiming to be the mother of a baby they held in a tug-of-war. When the king offered to chop the child in two and give half to each woman, one of them was delighted; if she couldn't raise the baby, no one else would, either.

But the other woman cried, "Give her the child, and by no means kill him!" She was willing to face years of sadness and intense feelings of loss for the baby's sake. Solomon gave the child to her, of course, reasoning that, regardless of who his "birth mother" was, the child deserved to be in the care of a woman who put his welfare first.

Today, a terrible reversal of that reasoning is occurring. A recent article in *George* magazine warned about "adoption's dirty little secret," those very feelings of loss and regret that many women who give up their babies (and some adoptees, including the author) suffer as the years go by.

"Even when adoption is the 'right' choice," writes Carol Kaufmann, "it's Hell for these women. They do not get over it.... I have learned the uncomfortable truth that abortion is often the less painful choice for them."

But is it the best choice for the child? Is it really only the mother's psyche and physical well-being that matter?

Perhaps *George* could provide more insight into the other side of this "dirty little secret" by conducting a survey among men and women who were adopted. In fact, all of us might find it interesting to answer this simple question:

If your birth mother told you she wished you had never been born, would you kill yourself to make her happy?

Me neither.

I've never heard anyone claim that adoption is a "glorious panacea," as Kaufmann says many politicians label it. I have heard it described as the search for an honorable and responsible conclusion to a difficult situation. Adoption may not be chock full of rosy answers, but at least nobody dies.

In the summer of 1975, I helped out at the Salvation Army Home and Hospital (a "home for unwed mothers," as the phrase was then) in Birmingham, Ala., working with dozens of young women who had decided against abortion. Most had been raked over the coals by their families for getting pregnant in the first place, and none of them enjoyed the shame, the physical pain or the change in plans that taking the time to deliver an illegitimate child was sure to mean. And yet every one of them had decided to swallow their pride and face their fears for the sake of their innocent kids.

While they were at the home, they attended chapel services. We sang songs about God's love, and the girls heard the Bible's amazing stories of His gentleness toward human frailty. They learned that, as Christians we believe that our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ensures our adoption into God's own family.

One day Rose, an inner-city teenager walked up beside me after chapel and whispered, afraid to hope too much, "Can I really get a fresh start?" She could and she did: It wasn't easy, it wasn't fun, but she made good use of the Salvation Army's available resources to keep up her high school studies and learn some "skills for living"-and to give her new son a chance at life. Not a guarantee of wealth and boundless happiness, just a chance to find his own place in God's plans.

It was infinitely more than he would have gotten at a "reproductive health clinic."

Who am I to say that a reluctant mother ought to put aside her fears, her frustrations, her shame and selfishness, and give her unwanted child up to someone who can offer the love she can't, or won't, give?

I'm a former fetus, that's who. Once upon a time I was too busy growing a central nervous system to worry that my mom might think the two kids she already had were plenty. Now, thanks to her heart and her conscience, I'm one of the lucky ones. The fact that you're reading this proves that you are, too.

The irony of all of the criticism adoption is getting today is this: If you or I had an unwanted litter of puppies or kittens on our hands, we wouldn't boot them down the nearest storm sewer, would we? We'd print up flyers that proclaim "free to a good home!" and badger our friends, relatives and colleagues until we placed every single one of them.

Why is it suddenly wrong to do as much for our daughters and sons?

Because for the past two and a half decades, abortion has been portrayed as a blood red badge of courage, a way for a woman to assert her independence and self-determination.

To plead for the adoption of her child is to ask her to put someone else's needs first, to value sacrifice above selfishness.

And in today's political and social climate, women are always right, always noble, when they put themselves first. We worship only our new holy trinity -- I, Me and Mine. That makes Angelica Evergreen's story doubly ironic: Her mother tossed her aside as worthless, yet if she had been allowed to grow and mature, Angelica would have become a woman--the very kind of creature whose rights we value above all else these days.

Thus these are dangerous times in which to be an unborn child, or even a newborn, as Angelica's brief life proves. Signs and labels warn women that alcohol and nicotine can harm their babies, but anyone who points out that abortion is far more harmful to children commits an unforgivable faux pas. And as long as there is any arbitrary deadline up until which we can legally kill our kids--such as the "viability of the fetus"--we shouldn't be surprised when women such as Angelica's mother choose to extend the deadline just as arbitrarily.

We pro-life pariahs pray that there will again come a time when the right to end our kids' lives at any stage of their development will be seen for what it is: as barbaric a license as the right to beat wives or to own-and kill-slaves, who also used to be considered less than fully human.

In the meantime, the greeting card companies have anticipated this year's Mother's Day by printing the usual paeans to Mom for all the years she bandaged our scraped knees and wiped away our childish tears. It's time to add a new line of cards, which will be bought by those of us who grasp that, for children like Angelica Evergreen, suffering now comes in fatally large doses. We realize that we, too, could once have faced a terrible judgment day in a "safe and legal" clinic or on a dirty city sidewalk.

One verse of such a card might, and should, go something like this:

*You may not have wanted me
The future, you couldn't see--
But still you found love you could give.
So now that I've seen
What my fate could have been,
Thanks, Mom, for letting me live.*

POST MODERN MORALITY

William E. Brown

We should have seen it coming.

For more than 30 years advertisers have tried to convince us to throw off the shackles of authority and live on the edge, to be ourselves, to have it our way. We have become accustomed to this brand of Postmodernism, which has defined popular culture.

Now, the moral confusion in American public discourse has taken a decidedly postmodern twist. With Bill Clinton hailed as our first "Postmodern President" the events of 1998 underscore the sweeping nature of the title.

Our "Postmodern" world rejects the promises of the "Modern" world that have dominated our culture since the Enlightenment. The unfulfilled hopes of scientific progress and dreams of world peace have faded into the background. The Modern experiment failed.

Post modernism can best be described as an attempt to forget the past and ignore the future by living for the "right now." Each person is like a site on the worldwide web. Our personality and priorities can change with a click. We decide what values to embrace and store them in our list of favorites.

As a result, Postmodern morality is subjective; a personal journey where the idea of shared moral truth is meaningless. Truth with a capital "T" is transformed into truth with a personal pronoun: "my truth."

In the Postmodern scheme, appealing to God as the source of truth and morality is laughable. The results are a wide array of challenges to a biblical worldview. Here are a few examples:

All morality is a personal choice

The reasoning:

"There is no morality 'out there'; it is all 'in here.' No one has my experiences or can understand my journey. Anyone who attempts to impose moral judgments on me is merely oppressive. Who are they to tell me how to live?"

The response:

How can we live together in our society if everyone is following his own rules of morality? It's like playing a game where all of the

participants make up their own rules. Who wins? Who loses? What's fair? The result is chaos, frustration and anger.

"Choice" is the mantra of Postmodern moralists. There is no truth, no absolute morality; just definitions and personal experiences. In the Postmodern scheme, the subjective nature of truth demands that issues related to morality remain private. The same is true in public morality where a smorgasbord mentality toward morality prevails.

Publicly, this way of thinking took center stage in the early debates over abortion. The "right to privacy" clause of the Constitution was extended to take precedence over other rights and protections, including the life of the unborn child.

Forgiveness is easier than permission

The reasoning:

"The underlying assumptions that allow me to live by my own moral code have one caveat: my rights end where yours begin. I am unaware of your moral standards, so I will follow my own moral choices until you inform me I have stepped over the line. If I do something disagreeable to you, I am sorry, I recognize that I may have offended your sensibilities and your own moral standards, but please don't condemn me. On my journey of moral awareness I need you to be supportive and forgiving, not critical or sanctimonious. You must grant me forgiveness, otherwise you are guilty of meanspirited moral superiority."

The response:

Recently, I spoke to a large group of executives with a Christian organization. I gave them a discussion question: "How can a person determine if a particular action is right or wrong?" Their answers were troubling, almost shocking. After talking among themselves for a while they answered, "A particular action is wrong if it hurts someone else."

"How do you know if it hurts someone?" I asked. "When they tell you," they replied. "Then you just ask for forgiveness."

There was little thought given that God's character and will are the standards for what is right and wrong and that we should conform our lives to Him.

What is forgotten in this reasoning is that forgiveness and consequences are two separate issues. David honestly pleaded for forgive-

ness for his gross sins (Psalm 51) but the consequences for his life were devastating (2 Samuel 12-21).

Let him who is without sin cast the first stone (John 8:7)

The reasoning:

"Maybe I've failed in your eyes, but nobody is perfect. You have failed at times, too. We are all human and I don't need hypocrites accusing me of wrongdoing when they are constantly failing. Even Jesus Christ said so. Only those who have never failed morally are worthy to criticize me."

The response:

The challenge has a greater impact because it carries an implied biblical approval and in some Bibles appears in red letters. Setting aside the obvious misuse of the passage (John 8 refers to a public execution, not a public confrontation) and ignoring the many passages which call us to correct and rebuke (2 Tim. 4:2; James 5:19-20; etc.), the demand never to judge the moral acts of others is frightening. As John Leo points out, this way of thinking is reflected in the growing numbers of college students who are reticent to criticize the acts of Adolph Hitler or Joseph Stalin.

Postmodern morality is nothing new. The worldview that removes God from the center of life results in a culture that struggles to define itself morally. When a society rejects God, it becomes, in the words of Nietzsche, "free floating;" a culture with no moral foundation, no moral center. In Postmodern morality, the arguments sound different but they are the same old reasons given to defend moral relativism, the belief that questions of right and wrong are not absolute, but dependent upon person, place, time, and circumstance. In his book, *Modern Times*, historian Paul Johnson, concludes, "All forms of moral relativism have an innate tendency to generate moral collapse since they eliminate any fixed anchorage and launch the ship of state on an ocean where there are no bearings at all."

While Johnson was referring to the moral struggles in public policy during World War II, his words sound alarmingly current.

No wonder we didn't see it coming.

[Dr. Brown is President of Bryan College, Dayton Tenn.]

WHAT IS A NEIGHBOR?

Joyce Broyles

In the fall of 1994, Doug had a brush with death when the fire he was lighting exploded in his face. His doctor warned him to stay out of the sun for at least a year. That meant hiring someone to do all of the yard work come spring and summer.

By the following May, keeping out of the sun had Douglas a little depressed. After many anguished hours of discussion, we decided that perhaps we were unable to care for our house and garden anymore. We agreed to have a realtor advertise for six months. If someone wanted to buy, we would know that was best for us.

During those months, I wondered where we would go if we did sell. Who would be our new neighbors? Would they be good to us? Would I have a chance to get to know them and to obey the second greatest commandment to "love them as I love myself"?

Some people I know do not believe that the Bible can relate to us today. Those ancient stories are nice, they say, but what do they have to do with us? Well, a good teacher can take those archaic concepts and apply them to the present.

Always trying to be the best teacher I can, I attend workshops occasionally. In Abilene I learned how to present those wonderful old truths using modern methods. In one session, the leaders presented an impressive skit, using only cardboard cutouts and a narrator. Called "Luke 10 Today," the message was clear.

"A certain woman went down from Washington to Richmond and ran over a spike, which punctured her tire and left her stranded by the side of the road. After raising the hood of her car, she tied a scarf to the door handle. She locked the doors, then sat in the car, praying for the Lord to send help!

"By chance, there came a limousine that way with a bumper sticker that read, 'Smile, God loves You.' When the occupants saw the stranded woman, they passed by in the far lane without smiling.

"And, likewise, there came a sports car with a cellular phone. On the rear bumper a sticker directed, 'Honk if You Love Jesus.' The driver passed by in the far lane without honking and without using his phone to tell the highway patrol about the woman's dilemma.

"But a certain working man, as he traveled to his job, came to the spot where the woman was. When he saw her raised hood, white scarf and flat tire, he had compassion on her.

"He stopped his old pickup truck which had no bumper sticker and crossed the four-lane highway, and offered to change the tire. The woman opened the door and gave him the key to the trunk. The man took out the spare tire, jacked up the car, removed the flat tire, and replaced it with the spare.

"When he had finished, the woman tried to pay him. He refused the money, saying, 'If my wife were stranded on the highway with a flat tire, I'd want some good Samaritan to stop and help her out.'

"So, he returned to his bumper-stickerless truck, smiled, honked at her, and went on his way.

"Which of these showed a neighbor's love?"

In October, the year had passed since the fire and Douglas could go out in the sun again. His depression left him, his enthusiasm returned, and he looked forward to time in the fields, riding his tractor.

At November's end, the six month period was up for the realtor. I think we were relieved that we could keep the place. Although it will mean many hours of work, we are enjoying it while we are able.

Meanwhile, I remember my questions. I have learned that no matter where I may have to live, my neighbor is anyone who needs me and lets me help in my own way.

THE USE TO BE MADE OF OUR FAULTS

Jean Nicolas Grou

This is a very important point in spiritual life; God intends even our faults to set forward the sanctification of our souls, and it rests with our souls whether they do so or not. (Not infrequently we suffer less real injury from a fault itself than from the way in which we deal with it.)

I am not now speaking of people who give themselves grudgingly to God and so commit numberless deliberate faults which can in no way be turned to good account. The souls to which I refer are those who in spite of all their resolutions against sin, are continually committing faults through impetuosity, weakness or inadvertence. Such people are wont to be greatly surprised and troubled at their faults;

they give way to false shame and become fretful and disheartened. But these are so many signs of self-love, more hurtful to the soul than the original fault.

You are surprised at your imperfections--why? I should infer that your self-knowledge is small. Surely you might rather be astonished that you do not fall into more frequent and more grievous faults, and thank God for His upholding grace. You are worried when you detect a fault, you lose your inward peace, and your disturbance lasts hours or days, as the case may be. This is not right. You should never allow yourself to be disturbed but when fallen you should rise up quietly and turn with a loving heart to God for forgiveness.

The worst evil, however, is when we grow vexed at our faults; as Francois de Sales says, "We are angry because we are angry; impatient at having shown impatience. But this is sorry work, and if you will be honest with yourself you will see that is altogether pride; you are mortified to find yourself weaker, less holy than you fancied yourself to be; perhaps too your aim was self-satisfaction, you wanted to be able to congratulate yourself on having spent a day or week free from faults. Then you grow discouraged, you relax your devotional exercises and begin to look upon perfection as unattainable."

"What is the use of such perpetual self-restraint and watchfulness? You ask. "What good does all my recollection and mortification do me, if none of my faults are corrected and I grow no better?"

This is nothing more or less than a snare of the devil, and if you would escape it you must resolve not to be disheartened; but even if you were to fall a hundred times a day, determine to rise up each time and go onwards. What will it matter though you have fallen in the way if you find your journey's end safely at last? God will forgive the falls: they often are caused by undue haste, which prevents us from taking fitting precautions, or with timid souls from a perpetual looking around for imaginary dangers which causes them to stumble.

Perhaps the holiest men are not always those who commit fewest faults, but those who have most courage, most love and the most free spirit; those who make the heartiest efforts for conquering self, and who are not afraid of a stumble, even of a fall, so long as their progress is certain. St. Paul says that "all things work together for good to them that love God"; and we may be sure that even their faults are included. God permits them to cure our vain presumption and to teach us our true measure. It was so with David. "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn thy statutes." Peter fell before he learned to know his own weakness. Paul remained humble amid triumphs granted to his eloquence. Remembering that he had been "a

blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," he proclaimed himself the "chief of sinners" bearing a "thorn in the flesh"--all his days, "lest I should be exalted above measure."

Who can doubt that in like manner God will help us to use our daily faults for greater sanctification? All the master of the spiritual life observed that God permits the holiest men to retain certain defects, never wholly overcome, in order to teach them how weak they are without His grace, to check any pride because of His gifts, to destroy the lurking remains of vanity which beset the soul, to keep up constant watchfulness, dependence on God and unfailing prayer. The little child who falls as he is learning to walk clasps tighter hold of his mother after he has hurt himself.

Then, too, our faults sometimes lead to opportunities of good which would not else have arisen. Some outbreak of temper or harshness or impatience leads you to humble yourself in reparation. The fault was sudden and not premeditated; the reparation is deliberate and hearty, though it cost you no small effort. Hence it was more acceptable to God than the fault was displeasing.

Again, He sometimes veils real holiness under external imperfections, which readily meet the eye or our neighbor, so as to prevent the praise of men from tarnishing true humility. God is a mighty Master of souls, be it ours to let Him work His way in us. By all means let it be your great object never to offend Him in anything, but when you have committed a fault, strive to be sorry, not for your mortified pride but because you have displeased Him; accept all inevitable humiliation, ask God to turn it to His glory, and you will make greater progress in holiness than by the most precise and outwardly well regulated life if it leads to self-love.

If God requires anything of us we have no right to draw back under the pretext that we are liable to commit some fault in obeying. It is better to obey imperfectly than not at all. Perhaps you avoid the society of certain persons because they make you cross or impatient. How are you to attain self-control if you shun all occasions of practicing it? Is not such self-choosing a greater fault than those in which you fear to fall? Aim at a steady mind to do right, go wherever duty calls you, and believe firmly that God is an indulgent Father and will forgive the faults which take our weakness by surprise in spite of our sincere desire to please him.

"Parents Get No Respect!"

Sonny Childs

Sonny Childs has had numerous opportunities to counsel families over the years. During those sessions, the three following reasons have most often been given by teenagers to explain their lack of respect for their parents:

First, teens often say "My parents say one thing yet do another." These teenagers always seem confused and complain of a double standard. Mom and dad tell me, "Don't smoke" yet they overeat. They warn, "Don't steal," yet they cheat on their taxes. They scold, "Don't speed," yet they mock the seat belt law. They warn, "Don't have sex," yet they watch dirty movies. They insist, "Don't swear," yet they gossip about the preacher. On and on the teenager goes drawing a picture of inconsistency and hypocrisy, while all along I'm thinking it's no wonder this teenager is confused about appropriate behavior.

Secondly, they often complain "Mom and Dad do not enforce their standards." Surprisingly, one of the most offered complaints about parents is their failure to carry through with punishment. Many parents see the teenage years as a never ending series of arguments and confrontations. Because of this discouragement parents are often tempted to waver on their standards in order to achieve peace in the family. They often compromise their value system and give in to the teenager's demands. Although this may seem like the necessary step at the time, family chaos is almost always the result.

Thirdly, teenagers often complain about their parents by saying "They do not care about my feelings." A wise man once said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Being able to effectively discipline your child is completely dependent upon that child's confidence in your love and care for them.

[Sonny Childs is an author and fulltime travelling evangelist. And there are not many of them around any more! He's held meetings in a number of churches you may know: Jennings, Turkey Creek, Glenmora and Pine Prairie, LA; Sellersburg, IN; Gallatin, TN. He preaches the gospel, seeks to get churches revived, and gives special emphasis to helping youth and families. Why not get on his mailing list? Address: PO BOX 611, Olney, IL 62450. PH: (618) 392-2487. EMail: ncchild@swworld.com --avw]

Y2K: What's the Scoop?

An excellent, knowledgeable, Christian approach to Y2K may be found on the internet at: www.gospelcom.net/icta/y2k/html/summary.html It is entitled "Y2k: An executive Summary," and written by Pete Holzmann, president of the International Christian Technologists' Association.

Some of his conclusions are: "Y2k is a serious problem, especially in the developing world.... Workers in developing nations should review their emergency preparedness and ability to obtain cash. Banking and telephone services may well be reduced or even unavailable for a time beginning on 1/1/2000. Debit card cash advances may be the best way to obtain cash worldwide if there's trouble in 2000; this would use the credit card transaction system rather than bank transfers....

"However, there's no reason to panic....Yes, computer errors will cause serious problems in some local areas. Many faxes will have the wrong date; some databases and spreadsheets will have wrong calculations until they are fixed. Some medical systems will have to rely on manual rather than automated measurements for a time.

"But the power grids will not shut down, the financial markets will not crash, airplanes will continue to fly. God is still in command....And God's gift to mankind of intelligence and creativity will once again allow us to cooperatively solve issues that surface in the early hours of January 1, 2000.

"The real Y2k danger is not technical, but societal. If public panic arises, the doomsayers will have won. Just as with fears of a run on the banks, if society panics about Y2k, it really could become a disaster. [But] 'God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.' —II Tim. 1:7."

R. H. Boll as a Writer, Editor, and Christian

Part 6

Alex V. Wilson

E. What He Taught about Christ and His Cross

Believing in God's grace means relying on Christ's cross, for that is what allows God to be both just and the justifier of sinners (Rom.3: 26). So naturally Boll dwelt much on Calvary. This becomes clear in a moving article he wrote about foreign missionary work (another subject that was very dear to his heart). Notice the prominence he gives to this theme of redeeming love. He wrote,

The Cross of Christ dominates the missionary work of the church from beginning to end. Only as the Cross is understood and believed in can there be true missions. This will be seen from the obvious facts that,

1. The Cross is the Reason for Missions.
2. The Cross is the Message of Missions.
3. The Cross is the Method of Missions.

Let us take these up in order.

The OBLIGATION of the Cross

The Cross of Christ necessarily demands missionary work. It would not be conceivable that the faith in the Cross should be non-missionary. The Cross is the supreme manifestation of the love of God in the presence of man's utmost need....On the cross the Lord Jesus gave Himself and His all for all mankind....(1 John 2:2.) In this fact lies the necessary reason for the work of missions....The very love of Christ constrains us....

The WORD of the Cross

....In "the word of the cross" centers the power of God unto salvation. The messengers of God...preached "Christ crucified."...By this were men begotten unto a new life, by this were they redeemed and saved. The resurrection, of course, is the necessary complement of the cross, validating...its all-sufficient Sacrifice. But on the cross love's great work for us was done: in it therefore lies the...power, the remission, the hope, the acceptance, the end of the old and the beginning of the new, for all men who receive it....

The WAY of the Cross

The Cross must also be the method of the missionary enterprise. This is a critical point. The cross...is the symbol of self-giving love. The principle of it must be exemplified in the missionary himself...No man can truly and effectively preach the gospel message from the standpoint of racial or national or social or personal superiority. The missionary's labor among the people to whom he is sent, is patterned

after his Lord's who came "not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." He is the burden-bearer and the foot-washer, for love's sake....

F. What Boll Taught about Conversion

While Boll emphasized the grace of God as much or more than anything else, he did not at all believe in "cheap grace"—or as it is sometimes called, "easy believism." And he certainly did not believe in universalism—that due to God's grace everyone will be saved in the end. Paul said, "God commands all men everywhere to repent," and that settled the matter for RHB. He wrote a leaflet, "True Repentance," and also a pamphlet, "Real Repentance." He stressed that *there is no remission of sins without repentance for sin.*

But he believed we must not preach repentance as though it is a work earning God's favor. "Real" repentance is not self-reliant reformation. So we must stress that it is a fruit of faith. Though he was misunderstood for it, Boll did not shy away from saying, "We are saved by *grace only*," and, "We are saved *only by faith*" (his emphasis). He went on to explain,

There may be (and indeed there is) something we must do to *apprehend* that grace. It is impossible to bestow a free gift upon a man unless he takes it; and if there is a God-appointed way to take it, thus must it be taken. But that is merely the acceptance, and contributes nothing toward the gift, nor does it pay for it or produce it....

The reason God demands [faith]...is that faith is the one, only thing that is non-meritorious. "Therefore it is of faith that it may be by grace" (Rom.4:16).... Faith affords no grounds for boasting. For faith is reliance upon another. It is in very nature a giving up, a surrender and submission, a looking to another for help....

The natural tendency of our perverted minds is to glory in works and to trust in what we have done.... We are nothing—only lost souls, dead in trespasses and sins. We can do nothing—only flee to Jesus and rely helplessly on Him. As for baptism—it is in no sense a work: it can barely be called an act. God would not let man baptize himself, lest he might think he had done something. Another must baptize him; he can but yield himself to be buried and raised. It is not by...the sacramental virtue of a rite or ceremony, but purely as His appointed expression of faith that baptism is at all valid with God. But this is valid and indispensable.

In *Truth and Grace* Boll wrote a perceptive article entitled "Present Needs." There he revealed valuable historical perspective about preaching the gospel and also preaching the sinner's response to the gospel:

Some of these days we will realize that we have not exactly the same class of people to deal with [that] the pioneer preachers had, and we will try to meet the needs of actual prevailing conditions....The

bulk of the hearers now is composed of men who need to be convicted of sin, whose consciences need awakening; men hardened, indifferent, or conceited, or entirely ignorant of all that pertains to God....Instead of detailed and polemical discussions of the "plan of salvation," these need to be taught of God; made to realize their individual responsibility to him and their personal relation to him. Christ needs to be held up before them....

There is too much taken for granted. Men hear of, get interested in, dispute about, items in the scheme of salvation, who have no conception of God, or of the Christ that stands behind the "scheme" and gives it meaning and power. Some of the preaching is hardly calculated to bring these sinners face to face with God, or to awaken humility, contrition, and true repentance, and loving trust toward him, and fear of his holiness and reverence and awe. Now if instead of that these hearers get a...rattling of dry precepts and empty directions that have no motive back of them, Christianity tends to become a "process," a dead wheelwork of regulations, a philosophy that busies itself with abstract arguments...while God is left out of view, Christ taken for granted, life and love and power lacking, Lord, deliver us!

If preachers in Churches of Christ had heeded those wise words, our history during the 20th century would have been far different--and better.

G. Christian Living

We have already seen what Boll taught about the source of our power for obedient, fruitful living. It is the indwelling Holy Spirit. But to benefit from His presence we must keep trusting and obeying.

Boll was careful to balance God's part and ours in this matter. Like Paul, he taught both that God is at work in us and that we must work out our own salvation (Phil.2: 12-13). Either fact without the other would be inadequate. In an article entitled "Achieving Comes After Receiving," he compared Christian living to Israel's conquering the Promised Land. Israel's armies had to march in and fight the enemies. Without that they would not have gained even an acre. More important than that, however, was the fact that the Lord told them beforehand, "*I am giving you this land* " Apart from that promise, and the faith and courage it inspired, they would never have dared to enter. They would have wimped out, like their fathers.

So Israel fought the battles, but God gave them the victories--by defeating their enemies who were much stronger than they. In the same way, we must obey by faith in order to win the victory over the world, the flesh and the Devil. But we should focus on the fact that we can obey--by faith--for we can do all things through Him who strengthens us.

Why go to RUSSIA when Needs HERE are so Vast?

Dan Wilson, of Goin' Fishing Ministries

A couple of different men (whom I respect) on separate occasions recently confronted me with the question, "Why should we spend all of this time and money to go to Russia for two weeks to share the Gospel with kids we can't even speak with ourselves, when there are so many in our own community who don't know the Lord?" This question is more poignant than ever after last month's devastation in Littleton, Colorado. There is an obvious and enormous spiritual bankruptcy in our own land; why not spend our limited resources to get the Truth to the immense number of children and teens at risk here where we already know the culture and can speak the language?

There are several good answers, none of which are really valid for any of us if we are not doing what we can here in our own Jerusalems. Before He ascended into heaven Jesus commanded His disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit to come on them and then they would be His "...witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." If we are not being His witnesses here in our home towns, then we are probably not taking advantage of the power of His Spirit and will not likely be effective witnesses in Russia even if we go there specifically for that purpose.

But if we are being His witnesses in our communities in America and we feel a desire to share Christ with those at "...the ends of the earth," then there are several good reasons to use the valuable resources that God makes available to us to get there. God's ways are not our ways, and He often works in ways that we think are impractical. When Jim Elliott decided to forgo what could have been a bright and lucrative career in the U.S. to go to Ecuador in order to reach primitive jungle tribespeople with the Gospel, many people told him that God would rather that he use his talents for Him in a more practical way. Fortunately, Jim and four missionary friends did not listen to those people and went anyway. After much prayer and hard work to contact the savage Aucas, Jim and the four who had joined him were killed by that very tribe -- the ones they had sacrificed all to reach. "Why, God?" many people asked in sorrow or anger. Five bright young lives committed to serving God snuffed out for a few primitive tribesmen? Wasn't this a waste of God's resources? But God's resources are just that--they are HIS and not ours. (And He used their deaths to stir His people worldwide and raise up many other workers.)

Peter tells us that God "is patient with you, not wanting ANY-ONE to perish, but EVERYONE to come to repentance." If He gives us a vision of those who need the Gospel and are not being reached then using those resources to reach them is not a waste.

And another thing...

Along these same lines, in my opinion the American church is wasting many of its resources in this country. No country on earth has more people working full time in Christian ministries than does our country. With less than five percent of the world's population, the U.S. has around ninety percent of the world's full time Christian workers. Probably 99% of the inhabitants of America live within easy driving distance of a Gospel preaching church. Most communities have Christian book stores, and Christian radio stations cover the land. **We Americans have by far the greatest access to Christian resources of any nation in history.** That is not to say that we need not continue to take the message out into the streets and alleys, but how can one say that we are wasting our resources by funneling just a few of them overseas where resources are not easily available.

The Gospel has been present in Russia for over 1000 years, kept secure by the Russian Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, that church has too often kept it too secure. It has kept the liturgy in an old form of the Russian language akin to Old English, and has too often been more concerned with the condition of its cathedrals and monasteries than it was with the condition of its people's souls. **The Russian on the street is rarely given the chance to hear in simple terms of God's deep love for them, of their need for a savior and of a Savior's sacrifice for them.** Empty religious tradition and nationalistic fervor too often cloud or obscure these truths in this great land.

Staggering Needs

As evidence of the huge need for the Gospel in Russia, I present the following statistics which were recently given in *Russian Life*, a secular magazine dedicated to the observation and promotion of Russian life and culture. --"Over the last 5 years, according to the Russian Interior Ministry, the number of criminal offenses perpetrated by organized criminal groups rose by 94.4%. Last year 1,619 government officials were found guilty of corruption and ties with the criminal world." --"2,000,000 Russian children lack families, and almost two-thirds of these children live on the street. According to a study by the non-governmental Association of Child Psychiatrists, this number surpasses that of the period following WWII. Only about 650,000 Russian children without families live in orphanages, with some 100,000 more placed there each year. Data released by the Russian Prosecutor General show that 40% of children let out of orphanages each year be-

come homeless. About 10 million Russian school-aged children never attend school...." --"According to *Kontinent*, alcoholism increased 30% in Russia in the past 5 years, cases of neurosis 10% and drug addiction 600%." --"70% of Russian pregnancies end in abortion, the Russian Health Ministry reported...." (*Russian Life*, Feb/Mar 99) Also the divorce rate in Russia is higher than it is in the U.S.

Another reason to use God's resources to take the Gospel to these summer camps is that no one else is doing it. As many as 300,000 Russian children attend several hundred summer camps in the St. Petersburg region. The only Russian entity capable of mounting a large enough campaign to take the Gospel to even a few dozen of these camps is the Orthodox church. They are not doing it. All too often, those leading the Orthodox church are more concerned with protecting their flock from outside influences or in building up their own power than they are of teaching them the Gospel. The evangelical Protestant churches, while growing, are still a tiny fraction of the population. They lack the physical resources and available manpower to mount more than small campaigns. But even if they did have these available to them, they would not have the invitation from most of the camp directors to do what we have been asked to do. WE have been invited to come, WE have the resources at our disposal and WE have the know-how in evangelism to fulfill the task.

Another reason to use these resources in this cause is that the doors to Russia and these summer camps are open NOW but they may not remain open for very long. In 1997 the Russian government passed a new law which, if fully implemented, would put religious practice back into the realm of Soviet-era type restraints. It has already been enacted, but as of yet has only been applied in specific cases and not across the board. Ironically, perhaps the greatest promoter of this law was the Russian Orthodox Church's top leadership, which saw the law as a necessary means to keep outsiders from encroaching on their territory. Those involved in establishing and growing this camp work from within Russia have taken steps to make sure that relations with the Orthodox church are congenial and to see that they are acting within the limits of this law, but who knows when their relations with either the Orthodox Church or the local government could go sour? The actions of our politicians may also eventually cause the door to be shut, or at least nearly so.

It is also becoming more difficult to effectively witness in Russia. Once the doors were opened in the early 1990's, there existed an immense curiosity on the part of most Russians to know what Westerners believed. That is swiftly changing. The West has flooded in, bringing with it mostly additional misery for the people. Western goods and advertising have raised the level of materialism, while at the same

time a crumbling economy unable to compete with the West has led to a decrease in the standard of living. For a good many Russians before the collapse of the Iron Curtain, ignorance was bliss. Western philosophies are viewed by many as having failed and Western Christianity is usually lumped in there with Western philosophies. In order to emotionally handle their hardships, many Russians are again adopting a nationalist outlook which, says that to be Russian is to be Orthodox, whether or not one actually attends church or even believes in God or not. Someone recently wrote, "Many Russians are now content to be atheistic Russian Orthodox." If we are going to be able to effectively reach the people with the Gospel in these camps, we need to do it NOW. As the adage goes, all we are promised is now, and the now is what we must take advantage of.

The Call from below as well as from Above

Another reason to go is the call. Last summer, near the end of one of our team's stay in a certain camp, the camp director asked me if we could bring a team of up to twenty-five Americans and Russians to her camp the following summer. In the time since, she has continued to request that we send teams to her camp this summer, the latest request coming just a couple of weeks ago, although there are doubts that she herself is a believer. Her camp holds three to four hundred campers at a time during three summer sessions. Our team that stayed there last summer was able to clearly present the Gospel to a good number of the campers and was blessed to see some clear commitments to Christ, yet they were unable to take the message into several of the cabin groups for lack of time. The Russian *campers* have told our interpreters that they want the Americans to come back. The *camp director* wants the Americans to come back. The *government* is allowing the Americans to come back. There are many camps where the call is just as great. How could we not answer this call?!

For those who are already committed to go this summer, I hope these facts will encourage you by reminding you of the immensity of the needs and the clarity of the call. May it also change the outlook of those who question the wisdom of your plans to go during a time of seeming danger and uncertainty. It is true that the Lord would have us be wise, not charging blindly into an area where there is great danger. But I assure you that the physical danger is not nearly as great as one might gather from the media. The spiritual dangers have always been the greater foe since the work we go to do is at its heart a spiritual one. Implore those who will support you in prayer to pray for your physical safety, but make it clear that the greater need is for prayer related to the spiritual battle -- prayer for the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, be strong, keeping in mind that no place on earth is safer than wherever the Lord wants you to be.

The Urgency of Doctrinal Preaching

David Dunlap

The doctrinal preaching of the word of God is a vital necessity. The proclamation of the scriptures with clarity and precision is God's method of transforming the lives of men and women. It is the authoritative link between the heart of God and the souls of men. The modern world has had enough of theories, conjecture and rationale—it hungers for the truth of God plainly spoken. It longs for the "thus saith the Lord". It is waiting for men of God, like Jonah of old to whom God spoke, saying, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee"(Jonah 3:1). Unfortunately, the preaching of the word of God has fallen out of favor with many evangelical church leaders. Today there is a growing opposition toward doctrinal preaching of the word of God. Social action is more appealing to many Christian leaders. They question the use of mere words, when the lost of this world are looking for deeds. In addition, Church growth experts contend that biblical preaching is old-fashioned; therefore, videos, panel forums, discussions, music, and multimedia presentations are now filling the place once occupied by preaching. Evangelical leaders defend their views by stating that the churches are filled, parachurch ministries are in demand, and Christians are busier than ever. But what is the spiritual condition of the church? Are these new methods in agreement with the word of God? Let us examine these issues more closely.

Those who continue to value preaching are calling for radical changes in the traditional methods. A growing number of church leaders throughout North America maintain that the faithful preaching of the word of God is no longer an effective means of reaching the lost and developing mature believers. The cry now is for preaching that addresses "relevancy" and the "felt-needs" of the audience. This technique is now being espoused by many church growth institutes and ministries throughout the U.S. and Canada. However, under closer investigation one discovers that this technique was examined and rejected by Bible-based Christians 70 years ago, when the modernist preacher Harry Emerson Fosdick urged its use in Christian churches. In 1928, he scolded godly men of the Book, writing, "Preachers who pick out texts from the Bible and then proceed to give their historic settings, their logical meaning in the context, their place in the theology of the writer, are grossly misusing the Bible. Let them not end but start with thinking of the audience's *vital needs*, and then let the whole sermon be organized around their endeavor to meet those needs. This is all good sense and *good psychology*." Sadly today, a growing number of evangelical leaders are urging the use of this same technique, albeit redressed in evangelical terminology. In his book on reaching out to "Baby Boomers", Doug Murren, the pastor of a large charismatic congregation in the Pa-

cific northwest, provides readers with the following seven suggestions for preparing messages:

1. Visit the "how-to" sections in your local bookstores.
2. Regularly have a small group submit a list of their greatest challenges at home and on the job.
3. Similarly, acquire inventories of needs from several secular (unsaved) people in your community.
4. Periodically, examine issues of Time, Newsweek, and USA Today, as these publications are on the cutting edge of the felt needs and fears people are facing.
5. Apply practical aims to every study, message or program in your church.
6. Practice composing practical, catching titles for your messages.
7. Limit your time to 20 minutes. And don't forget to keep your messages light and informal, liberally sprinkling them with humor and personal anecdotes.

It is remarkable that all of these suggestions are adapted to meet man's social, emotional and material needs; furthermore, not one refers to the word of God or to meeting man's most important need—spiritual separation from God. These new methods are not resting upon the bedrock of the word of God, but rather upon the shifting sand of psychological and humanistic principles.

This raises several new questions: What negative consequences will these new methods bring? Is this new preaching method harmless? Is it merely an evangelistic fad and nothing more? Furthermore, should Bible-believing Christians embrace it as an effective evangelistic tool? A closer investigation may serve to help us answer these and other questions. Professor James Davidson Hunter, a researcher from the University of Virginia, has studied the views of evangelicals at 16 leading seminaries and Bible colleges, and reported his findings in 1987 in his book entitled "Evangelicalism: the Coming Generation." Hunter argues convincingly that seminaries are moving away from doctrinal orthodoxy. Among the students he interviewed, over 50% said that the Bible should not be taken literally in matters of science and history. There were 33% who disagreed with the statement, "The only hope for heaven is through personal faith in Jesus Christ"; 46% felt preaching to unbelievers "about hell" is in poor taste. Jay Kesler, the president of Taylor University, a Christian college in the Midwest, stated, "I agree with Hunter's observations of the changes taking place not only at Christian colleges and seminaries, but in evangelical culture generally. Moreover, in 1994 Josh McDowell Ministries conducted an extensive study on the Christian character of evangelical young people in the U.S. In the study 3,795 young people between the ages of 11-18 were asked 193

questions concerning their commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. Although 86% stated that they had trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior, the results of the survey uncovered an array of troubling statistics. The study revealed that 45% watched MTV at least once a week; 57% said that the Bible was not a reliable standard of truth. The study also revealed that many young people are cheating, smoking, gambling, watching X-rated movies and engaging in premarital sex. Further research has shown that many Christians do not possess a satisfactory understanding of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; such as justification, the deity of Christ, inerrancy, imminency and sanctification. Why are evangelical young people engaging in such harmful activities? Why is there so little understanding of biblical doctrine? One reason must be - the failure of the evangelical churches to preach and teach the great doctrines of the faith. When the Holy Scriptures are taught with conviction, lives and lifestyles will be transformed to the glory of God(Isa. 66:2).

The New Testament models this practice of doctrinal preaching and demonstrates the blessing that will follow. The preaching of doctrine characterized the teaching ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles. As Christ was teaching His disciples, it was said of Him, "He taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in His doctrine"(Mark 4:2); as others heard His teaching it was said, "...the people were astonished at His doctrine"(Mt. 7:24); the early New Testament Church "continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine"(Acts 2:42); and they were exhorted to "Preach the word..exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine"(2 Tim. 4:2); they were entreated to refute the false teachers with doctrine, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers"(Titus 1:9). Doctrinal preaching was the charge, challenge, and resource to all who sought to serve and honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another crucial factor in favor of doctrinal preaching is its ability to preserve the church from false teaching. Doctrinal preaching by definition involves doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction(2 Tim. 3:15). Corrective preaching, therefore should address doctrinal error and also the false teachers who are bringing the error. Paul charges the New Testament believers, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"(Romans 16:17). The failure to do so will open the door to false teachers and cause many sincere believers to be spiritually imperiled. A sad account is given by Henry Theissen, a former professor of theology at Wheaton College, who points out that in the absence of passionate doctrinal preaching, doctrinal error found fertile soil in which to flourish, leading to the formation of the Jehovah's Witnesses. He writes, "Oratorical preaching may bind the congregation to the preacher;

but when the preacher leaves, the people leave also. It has been often demonstrated that only when people are thoroughly taught the word of God do they become strong Christians and effective workers for Christ. There is a definite connection between doctrinal preaching and mature spiritual growth. Thomas DeWitt Talmadge may be cited as a man of great oratorical powers who built up a large congregation by his ability. However soon after Talmadge's death, the Brooklyn Tabernacle (which seated 4,000 persons) fell into the hands of Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (known to us today as the Jehovah's Witnesses). Today, the total number of Jehovah's Witnesses world-wide is estimated to be 11.5 million strong. However, this sad situation may have been averted through vigorous doctrinal preaching. May this illustration serve as a warning and wake-up call to all serious believers. New Testament churches must put aside the current popular fads, the glitter and sparkle of the newest trends, and return to the rock-solid foundation of doctrinal preaching and the unchanging power of the word of God. Then the church will be strong, believers vigorous for Christ, and the world attentive to the life-changing power of the gospel.

Preachers Should Build Bridges

by Alex V. Wilson partly, & John R.W. Stott mainly

I (avw) strongly agree with brother Dunlap's preceding article on the great need for doctrinal preaching in this unanchored age. We must not only teach the basics of Biblical faith, but do so regularly and with authority and emphasis. Yet I wonder if he does not *overly-minimize* "relevancy" in preaching, where we address the "felt needs" of the people. It's not so much a matter of *either-or*, but *both-and*, is it not?

One of the outstanding preachers of the past 45 years has been (and is) John Stott of London, England. Condensed versions of his sermons have appeared off and on in Word and Work for several decades. Years ago, when visiting Manila, he graciously gave us permission to reprint them from his church magazine. They are always Bible-based, and usually expository. But Stott also stresses that preaching needs to be pertinent to our time

His excellent book, **BETWEEN TWO WORLDS -- The Art of Preaching** (Eerdmans, 1982), has a 40-page chapter on the Biblical foundations for preaching. He believes in doctrinal preaching! But he then has an equally long chapter entitled "Preaching as Bridge-Building." There he mentions the "chasm" -- the "deep rift between the biblical world and the modern world ...It is across this broad and deep divide of two thousand years of changing culture...that Christian communicators have to throw bridges. Our task is to enable God's revealed truth to

flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women of today."

He tells of two university students, brothers, who once approached him. Though they'd been brought up as believers by Christian parents, one was now an atheist and the other an agnostic. To Stott's amazement, they frankly told him they were not interested in the truth or falsity of Christianity. "What we want to know is not whether Christianity is *true*, but whether it's *relevant*. And frankly we don't see how it can be. It was born 2000 years ago in a first-century Palestinian culture. What can an ancient religion of the Middle East say to us who live in the exciting world of the end of the 20th century? We have men on the moon, transplant surgery, genetic engineering. What possible relevance can a primitive Palestinian religion have for us?" This, Stott concludes, is "the challenge which confronts Christian preachers today." [That may not be so true in isolated parts of the Bible belt. But it's a *potential* danger anywhere, as TV, Hollywood and computers often spread the contagion of unbelief right into our homes.]

Stott recognizes there are perils in the "demand for relevance. If we become exclusively preoccupied with answering the questions people are asking, we may overlook the fact that they often ask the wrong questions and need to be helped to ask the right ones. If we acquiesce uncritically in the world's own self-understanding, we may find ourselves the servants rather of fashion than of God....Nevertheless, there is a great need for more understanding of the modern world around us." He then warns of two extremes:

If we are conservatives [in theology] and stand [for] historic Christian orthodoxy, we live on the Bible side of the gulf. That is where we feel comfortable and safe. But we are not at home in the modern world on the other side, especially if we have reached —or passed— middle age. It bewilders and threatens us. So we tend to insulate ourselves from it.[Therefore] our preaching is seldom if ever earthed. It fails to build a bridge into the modern world. It is biblical, but not contemporary. And if we are called to account for our practice of **exposition without application**, [avw's emphasis] we piously reply that our trust is in the Holy Spirit to apply his Word to the realities of human life....

I turn now to the characteristic fault in the preaching of those whose theology is liberal. They are modern people...sensitive to the current mood. They read modern philosophy. They are familiar with the writings of living novelists and the discoveries of modern scientists. All their sermons are earthed in the real world; but where they come from, heaven alone knows. These preachers have allowed the biblical revelation to slip through their fingers.

[It is] one of the greatest tragedies of our time [that] *conservatives are biblical but not contemporary, while liberals are contemporary but not biblical.... Each side has a legitimate concern, the one to conserve God's revelation, the other to relate meaningfully to real people in the*

real world. Why can we not combine [these concerns and learn from each other]?

Stott urges preachers neither to over- nor under-estimate our congregation's intellectual capacity. He pleads that we treat our hearers as "people with real questions; that we grapple in our sermons with real issues; and that we build bridges into the real world in which they live and love, work and play, laugh and weep, struggle and suffer, grow old and die. We have to...challenge them to make Jesus Christ the Lord of every area of [life], and to demonstrate his contemporary relevance." (See the 2nd quote inside the front cover for more on this.)

In other books he has written, Stott himself has done much along these lines of applying scriptural truth to current issues. He has written excellent *expositions* of various books of the Bible: Psalms, Acts, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, and the letters of John. You need not agree with all his interpretations to receive blessings from his insights. He has some very significant *doctrinal* studies too: on Christ, the Holy Spirit's ministries, the Bible, the cross of Christ, the church, evangelism, and missions. But in addition his book entitled *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* deals with contemporary *social ethics* (Revell, revised 1990; paperback.)

In this well-researched volume he wrestles with problems like politics, human rights, work and unemployment, poverty and wealth, interracial relationships, feminism, marriage and divorce, abortion, and homosexual partnerships. In all these areas he seeks to develop a "biblical mind" or worldview. That is, he sets forth scriptural principles on which we can base our beliefs and decisions. We shall not all reach the same conclusions, but at least we can avoid some serious errors and have a basis for cooperating with others in opposing evil and error. In *Between Two Worlds*, he justifies this approach:

We who are called to be Christian preachers today should do all we can to help the congregation to...develop their ability to distinguish between truth and error, good and evil. Of course we should encourage an attitude of humble submission to Scripture, but at the same time make it clear that we claim no infallibility for our interpretations of Scripture. We should urge our hearers to test and evaluate our teaching. We should welcome questions, not resent them....

Bridge-building between the revealed Word and the contemporary world will be authoritative in expounding biblical principles, but tentative in applying them to the complex issues of the day. [It will be a] combination of conviction and open-mindedness, teaching the people and leaving them free to make up their own minds.

May the Lord help us not to conform to this age, but to be transformed through renewing our minds by His Word and Spirit. An experienced, mature, Bible-based thinker like Stott can help us in this responsibility, and in our preaching.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Kentucky-Indiana Fellowship Week August 2-6:

Evening topics include: "God's Plan/Purpose for Mankind"; "God's Plan for Marriage"; "Parent-Child Relationship"; "Yours, Mine, Ours and Theirs" (blended families)

Antioch Christian Camp Frankfort Ky

Jr. Wk. - June 6-12 (ages 9-12)

Music Wk. - June 20-27 (14 +)

1st Chance - July 2-4 (ages 5-8)

Teen Wk. - July 11-17

Jr. Music (July 25-31) (9-13)

For additional information contact: Lyle Baker, 355 Bark Branch Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601. (502) 223-7056

From the "Brady Bulletin" (Ken & Cindy): Cindy's parents (Hall & Alice Crowder) are very busy with their booktable schedule, with an average of 3 week-ends a month for the next 3 months. "Please pray for their health during this time. Mom has had some trouble with her hip, but we are hoping that is on the mend with the help of a cortisone shot last week. Also please pray for wisdom for them to know when to slow this ministry down. It is difficult for them to refuse invitations, when it means that less money will be coming in to

help send Bibles and Christian books to people overseas."

Westminster Witness (Gary Pearson) June 30-July 3 is **JUBILEE**, the largest gathering among Churches of Christ east of the Mississippi River. It is held in Nashville Convention Center. Lynn Anderson will be the keynote speaker. For more information, call (800) 382-5004

Paul & Virginia Kitzmiller... arrived back in Louisville on May 13. They'll be home for the summer and can be reached via e-mail at pkitzmiller@compuserve.com

Gallatin: Congratulations to Melissa Hollins who has been chosen Miss Tennessee National Teenager. She is the daughter of Ricky & Teresa Hollins and her grandparents are Huelin & Joan Hollins. Her essay "What's Right About America" played a vital role in her selection.

Correction...Jerry Carmichael is not at Tell City Church of Christ, but at the **Linton Church of Christ**. Good to see that some are actually reading the News & Notes. Jerry reports Safe Travels: "We are thankful for a safe and wonderful trip to Pennsylvania. There were a total of 43 and 16 of those were from our congregation. This completed our 11th major bus trip since 1993.

God has richly blessed us with the joy of fellowship each time. We have ministered to over 180 individuals through the bus trip ministry. A total of 37 from our church have been on at least one trip."

50th Wedding Anniversary

The Broaddus family extends an open invitation for friends and co-laborers to help celebrate their parents (Victor & Mae) 50th wedding anniversary. It will be held at the Cramer & Hanover Church of Christ (fellowship room) on Wednesday June 2nd from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. If you can't make it, why not drop them a card at 2035 Cummins Ct. #6, Lexington, KY 40503

Highland Church, Louisville

Our midweek service consists of an hour of prayer and Bible study. Our current subject of study is "How to Interpret the Bible," led by James Girdley.

Order Elsewhere, Please

We're sorry that the book review of Jerusalem in Prophecy omitted saying to order it from your local Christian bookstore. We don't carry it.

Ralph Ave. Church, Louisville

We praise the Lord that 104 were present April 4 to hear the Word. Some were visiting family but there were some here that are not attending any church regularly.

Manila, Philippines... 25 students graduated from one course or another at Central Bible College. 3 are already pastor-teachers; 3 are involved in starting new congregations; 1 went to a remote province to do mission work; 3 are 'fulltime' church workers; 2 are considering to begin church ministry; 2 are active 'lay' workers; the rest are young people who are growing, ministering in various ways. For the whole school year 114 came to study to be equipped to serve the Lord. We thank God for those who support CBC in prayer and finances. --David Moldez

A Chance To Remember & Help:

Tom Reynolds was the first director of Antioch Christian Camp, located on 36 acres of wooded land a few miles from Frankfort, Ky. He and his wife Jean helped start the camp 20+ years ago. It has accommodations for about 60 campers/staff.

Tom's family and the camp Board have 2 goals: to provide campers something they can use daily in play, & thus to have a memorial for Tom--who went to be with the Lord a few years ago. The project aims to set up an outdoor basketball court, with 2 goals, benches & electric lights. It will cost from 1-2,000 dollars. Donations may be sent to Antioch Christian Camp, 355 Bark Branch Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601 ATTN: Tom Reynolds Fund. Questions? Call Debra Gordon, (606)734-7361.

VOICES From The FIELDS

Robert & Joy Garrett

April 1999

Zimbabwe

April is our busiest camp month, Easter and the first term school holidays coincide and the rains have come to an end.

Easter Camp: 42 Boys and 35 Girls over the age of 18 were blessed by four days of Bible study and fellowship over the long Easter weekend. Then followed the Junior Week with 34 Girls and 30 Boys ages 9-11. Immediately followed by a long weekend for the Women's Camp. A team of men did the cooking for 160 women while the women enjoyed their sessions.

Senior Camp begins the last week of April (4 days away as I write this). These camps provide a great spiritual benefit. We have witnessed an increased spiritual growth over the years due to the spiritual work done at these camps. One girl came to the Lord during the Junior camp and one woman came to the Lord during the women's camp.

Keeping the old truck/buses on the road is an increasing problem. the three-ton Mazda blew a cylinder head gasket just as it started to collect 22 women from Wuyu-Wuyu, plus their luggage. We had to send the open 3-ton Ford instead. Fortunately the rains were over.

Firewood for cooking the food over open fires is a perennial problem. Our "forest" here in Rockwood is able to supply, but not always enough. We do not allow trees to be cut except to make way for buildings or necessary activities. Our two workers families do all their domestic cooking with firewood and the forest supplies enough naturally dead branches and windfalls to meet their needs. Often, there is the occasional dead tree that can supply firewood for the camp cooking. Some of the smaller cooking is done over an electrical hotplate and also over a gas stove.

May 9 - Lord willing, we arrive back in the States on our furlough. Our plane lands in Detroit so we plan to spend the first two weeks with our son David and his family in Midlands, Michigan before proceeding on to Louisville. Our contact address in the States will be 16111 Plum Creek Trail, Louisville, KY 40299. Phone: (502) 267-7759. (But contributions should be sent to the same address as always.)

PORTLAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, LOUISVILLE

The PCS Diamond Anniversary Groundbreaking Ceremony was held on May 16, 1999! The following items were announced at the ceremony:

Nathan Grimes (PCS Class of 1977), who was the architect for the project, was also chosen by the PCS Board as the general contractor for this endeavor.

The project which originally included plans to enclose the two-story and one story high school buildings and add new restroom facilities has been expanded to include additional office space. This expansion was made possible by the generosity of one of the school neighbors who donated the property. The additional office space will free space in the existing building for classroom use which is needed with expected enrollment increases.

The opportunity for the additional office space, along with higher than expected construction costs, has raised the estimated project goal from \$186,000 to \$250,000. At the time of the ceremony approximately \$165,000 had been given or pledged toward that goal.

The Lord has truly blessed PCS for seventy-five years and He is continuing this ministry to students and their families. If you would like to be a part of the Lord's work at Portland Christian School, gifts may be sent to the school at: 2500 Portland Avenue, Louisville, KY 40212-1092

* * *

Paul Clark Goes Home

We received word shortly before going to press that Paul Clark--longtime preacher and college teacher--went to be with the Lord on May 28, after a long bout with cancer. More next month.