

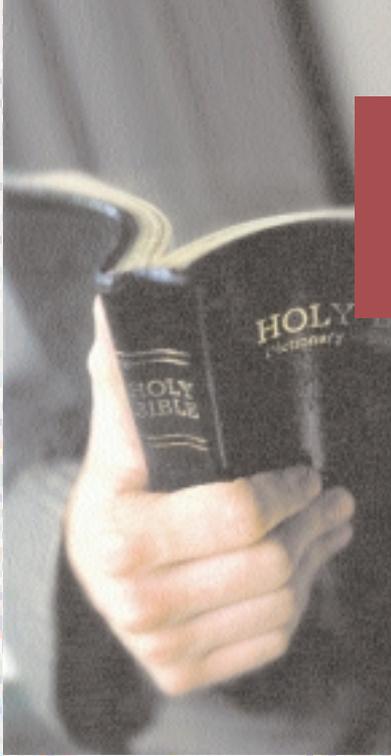
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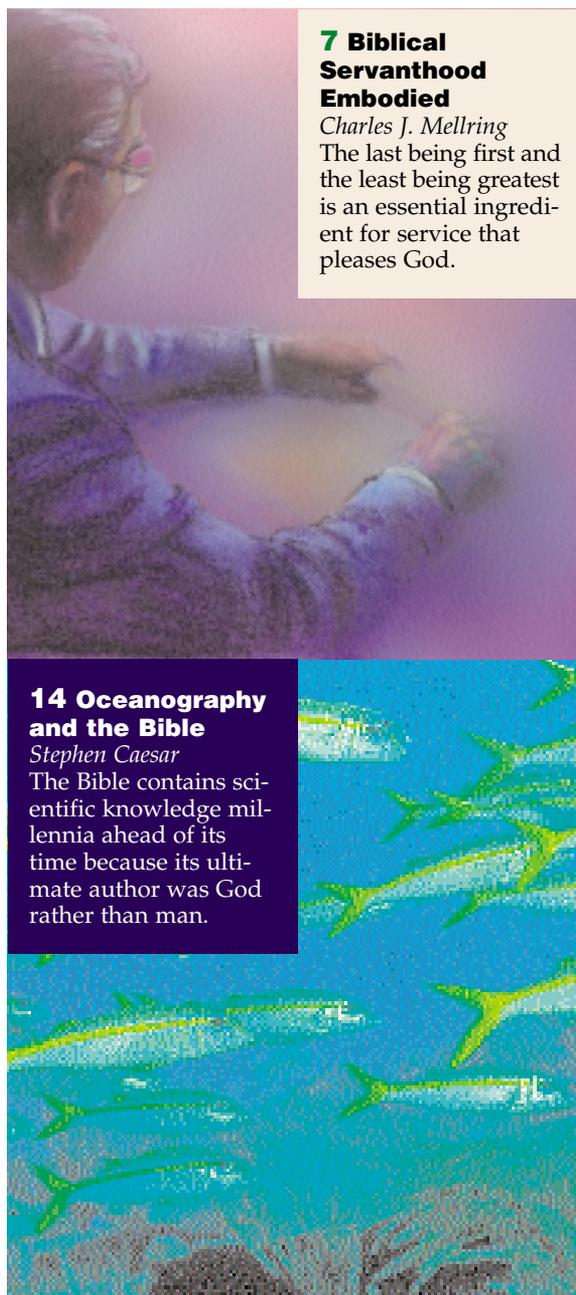
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I just finished reading "My Greatest Concern for Fundamentalism" [Biblical Viewpoint, Sept./Oct. 1999] and had to write to thank you for an excellent article. I am encouraged to see more men beginning to take the attitude of this article. . . . There is to be a graciousness in working with those who truly want to be godly Fundamentalists. I trust that many will be moved by the words of your article and seek to be fervent in their evangelism, realizing that there is room for discussion in Fundamentalism on certain issues.

Donald E. Karnes  
donkarnes@series2000.com

In the Wit & Wisdom page of your Sept./Oct. issue there appeared the following quote: "Prayer is not an argument with God to persuade Him to move things our way, but an exercise by which we are enabled by His Spirit to move ourselves His way.—Leonard Ravenhill." This sounds very pious and super-spiritual. However, I doubt very much if there is a Bible verse (or verses) that supports it. In fact if anything, the Scripture seems to say just the opposite (e.g., John 15:7 and Psa. 37:4). I am to ask for my wants (desires). There is nothing wrong with that. Unless you can give Scripture that says otherwise we will have to conclude that Mr.

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Ravenhill (and those who think like him) really don't know what they are talking about.  
Ralph Filicchia  
ralcar@mediaone.net

Although I have never been editor of a news magazine, I have seen enough of them to appreciate the quality of yours. It is a fine-looking periodical which should attract favorable comment and support for the FBF. . . . We are anxious to preserve materials from all aspects of Baptist life in Georgia, and we are pleased to include your publications.

Robert Gardner  
Senior Researcher in  
Baptist History  
Mercer University  
Macon, GA

I was just searching for something in past issues of *Frontline* and came upon the article in the March/April [1999] issue written by Kurt Woetzel. It is entitled "Sermon and Song: A

Vital Duet." He is the music director at Trinity Baptist Church in Concord, New Hampshire. I attended the FBF meeting there in October. I sang with the congregation as this man led the music, and I heard the teen choir that he directed. What a blessing to see first-hand that what this writer has given us in *Frontline* is true in his ministry. . . . How I praise the Lord for writers who honor Him not only in their writing but also in their lives of ministry for Him.

Martha Mazzaferro  
PEMAR@aol.com

I wanted to write and express my gratitude for the work and effort that goes into producing this fine magazine. The articles are timely and often helpful. I am a young pastor needing all the help I can get and this is an excellent way to receive it.

Pastor Rick Weesner  
Geneva, IL

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## A Call for Mercy in the Midst of Judgment

I went to into the Post Office the other day, and there was a gentleman in front of me in line who purchased \$75.00 worth of 33-cent stamps. I almost fainted. When I got to the counter, I thought I'd have some fun. The young lady said, "May I help you, Sir?" I said, "Yes, ma'am; Give me a one-cent post card, and a three-cent stamp, please." She almost fainted. With a puzzled, bewildered face, she said, "Where have you been for the last 50 years?" I said, "It's not been at the Post Office!" Then she laughed and said, "Times have changed." I thought, time has not changed, but we as a nation have changed. In the workplace, church, home, and schools, society has changed.

What has happened? "Satan knoweth he hath but a little time," and he is working overtime. As I see it, we are in a spiritual warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The battlefield is the mind. Respect for authority, morality, and spirituality is gone.

The battle is raging in the home. We have no time for each other, or for God and His Word. Both parents work, and the children are left to fend for themselves. Therefore the television, videos, computers, and friends babysit them as they soak their minds in cesspools of secular humanism. There is no time for the family altar

and Bible reading. We are producing young people who are "couch potatoes." There is so much emphasis on the material and temporal instead of the spiritual and eternal.

In the average home in America, they are getting their philosophy of life from "Oprah" and other talk-show hosts. In the average home the television is on 12-15 hours a day, and many are on for 24 hours a day. One lady told me, "I can't sleep with the T.V. off." The average person is more concerned about the evening news than the Good News.

Why has society changed? Because we as a people have changed. God has been kicked out of

the home. It is no more "in God we trust," but "in gold we trust."

Parents have given up their responsibility of training and teaching their children. Many have given their responsibility to the state schools—a place that does not want God or the Bible. The average so-called Christian school ought to be ashamed to call itself "Christian." The sports program has become a "golden calf," and standards and discipline are considered legalism. Many parents will sacrifice high standards of spiritual and academic excellence for a good

opportunity for their child to be drafted by the NBA.

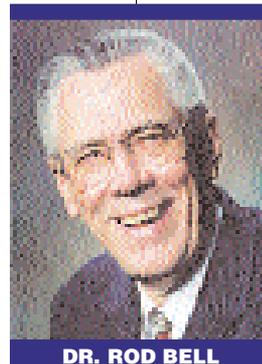
Oh God, bring back the glory to our homes. Send revival to our churches. Give us "red hot" prayer meetings. Sunday night services are shamefully attended. The prayer meetings are almost non-existent. Visitation and witnessing are not emphasized because of a cold-hearted pastor or people. We in America must have revival! We are on the edge of anarchy. We are "drinking" from God's judgment. I am not talking about an evangelistic service, where we hear some good preaching and a few souls get saved. Nor am I talking about having Christians "rededicate" their lives to God—again. I am talking about an old-fashioned, God-honoring, Christ-exalting, soul-convicting, life-transforming, Holy Spirit revival! We need revival where the presence of God's power is a reality!

As I see it, we must have a Biblical, divine intervention in the affairs of men so that the life is stripped naked and open before a Holy God! Oh how we need God to visit His people in awesome, transforming, convicting power. "In the midst of judgment, remember mercy." Send us a mighty outpouring of Thy Holy Spirit!

I believe that in the 21st century our nation will experience one of the three "R's"—Revival, Revolution, or the Return of our Lord. Brethren, pray. Psalm 85:6 says, "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in Thee."

Do it again, Lord.

*In the average home in America, they are getting their philosophy of life from "Oprah" and other talk-show hosts.*



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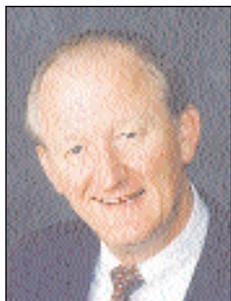
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A casual look at contemporary ministries evidences the widespread opinion that whatever works in the commercial world is what we should practice in ministry. There are certainly a great many tools and technologies that we should incorporate, such as improved methods of communication, record-keeping, and the dissemination of information.

As they are defined in the business world, however, pragmatism (“if it works, do it”) and public relations (“never acknowledge defeat and always rationalize failure”) must be shunned in the carrying out of our ministries for Christ. One irreplaceable, timeless, Biblical directive for ministry is the principle of servanthood.

As set forth by our Savior and exemplified in Scripture, selfless servanthood is hardly the code of conduct for the commercial world. Most would regard it as suicidal and utterly contradictory to every other business instinct. But this Scriptural pattern should be the rule of life for Christians in general and for Christian leaders in particular, not the exception. The last being first and the least being greatest is not unrealistic or unattainable pie-in-the-sky. It is an essential ingredient for service that pleases God and ministry that moves men.

We can survive without the applause of men, but what about the approval of Christ? What about the

testing fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

Those expert in Scriptural languages and culture tell us that there were two general classes of servants: those *hired* to attend to the needs of the master, and those *owned* outright by the master and thus bound to serve him (bond-slaves). Scripture regularly designates us as the latter. This may not sit well with our modern love affair with self-esteem and individual rights, but the Bible is clear about our primary duty to obey our Master and please our Owner (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Heb. 12:28, 29). To whom may we look for a Biblical example of such servanthood fleshed out?

### **John the Baptist**

John the Baptist brought many people to a place of preparation for the ministry of Messiah (Matt. 3:5). His mission and passion was to bear witness to the coming Christ (John 1:6–8) and to shun any recognition for himself (John 3:30). John bowed before His Savior (John 1:27) and sealed his servanthood with his blood (Matt. 14:10; cf. Rev. 12:10–11)—a servant to the end!

### **Philip the Evangelist**

Philip the deacon was also Philip the evangelist, a faithful soul winner. But unlike many modern evangelists who are obsessed with numbers and popularity, Philip followed his Master submissively (Acts 8:26, 27). When the Lord instructed him to leave those great meetings in Jerusalem

**Charles J. Mellring**

# **Biblical Servanthood Embodied**

and go to a "desert place," he "arose and went." Why should he leave a thriving ministry for a deserted place with few people? That doesn't make good ministry sense, does it? It is the only ministry decision that makes sense if the Master orders it. His servanthood showed in his prompt obedience.

Moreover, Philip faced a prominent prospect confidently (Acts 8:27-35) in addressing a man of "great authority," the Ethiopian eunuch. Servanthood must not prevent us from seeking souls even among "great" people. And finally, Philip followed up Scripturally (Acts 8:38). No accommodation, no exception, he simply followed through in full obedience to the Commission (as should we) at this most crucial point.

**Stephen the Martyr**

Together, Philip and Stephen set a high standard for deacons. Stephen the deacon was full of faith and power (Acts 6:8). Consequently, he was a fearless proclaimer of truth. Indeed, his sermon is one of the longest recorded in the New Testament. Like John the Baptist, he certified his servanthood with his blood (Acts 7:69). As earth-bound and time-conscious as we are, we need to get a glimpse of the brevity of our sojourn here compared to the endless eons of eternity. Stephen's triumphant entry into glory reminds us of Whose we are and why we are here, and should motivate us to a more zealous witness, a more selfless work, and a more servant-like walk.

The Master exhorts His servants to preach the word diligently in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2) and desires that "men ought always to pray." In my present ministry (primarily praying and preaching), opportunities for servanthood abound. As I continue to accept opportunities to preach for the Master and seek to devote more time to intercession, I become increasingly aware that all time is not mine, but God's.

Charles J. Mellring is a retired Baptist pastor living in Guys Mills, Pennsylvania, whose ministry now involves supplying pulpits and writing.



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# There Cometh One After Me . . .

**Kerry James Allen**

Probably most of us who are attempting to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in some capacity aspire to recognition and acknowledgment of our accomplishments. We would like to think that our teaching, preaching, and assorted labors for the Kingdom will have an impact on this and future generations.

Discouragement is part of our portion, mostly due to the fact that we have high expectations of what should be and what we would like to accomplish. When there is a disparity between that which is desired and that which is, despondency results, because we feel we are not accomplishing all that we would or could. (Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life—Proverbs 13:12.) This is a shame, because all sweat, blood, and tears expended for the Savior toward men and women for whom He died will be greatly rewarded, right down to the giving of a glass of cold water.

The question to be explored here is not, *Are you discouraged, and if so, how shall we set about to cheer you;* but, *Are you discontented, thinking perhaps that God should have something greater for you?* Might your expectations be too high and not have their source in God? (My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him—Psalm 62:5.) Perhaps the example of an unknown man and a few thoughts from the life of Jesus Christ will bring home to our hearts the concept that through death comes life, and that only through

the eye of faith will we ever see just how much good we are all accomplishing for Christ.

In 1843, out of humble beginnings in Massachusetts, a life began that would touch the lives of millions around the world. This young man studied at Yale, became a decorated Civil War hero, and met President Lincoln. He then went on to become a lawyer, a journalist, and an author, writing 40 books. He eventually trained in theology, becoming a Baptist pastor and starting a church that grew to 4000–5000 in attendance (one of the largest in America). He pastored for 43 years. He founded a school of theology in Philadelphia for the purpose of training men for the ministry. This man was a consummate philanthropist, founding Temple University, where he served as president for 38 years, and Samaritan Hospital. The university and hospital, both in Philadelphia, were funded primarily by the lecture “Acres of Diamonds,” given nationwide and delivered more than 6,000 times, raising \$4 million. It was conservatively estimated that he spoke face-to-face with over 13 million people in his lifetime. His name? Russell Herman Conwell.

However, this story is not about the mighty Conwell, but about an unknown man who influenced him, a man named John Ring. Note this Civil War excerpt in Conwell’s words from his biography, written by Robert Shackleton, concerning the young man John Ring.

A boy up there in the Berkshires, a neighbor’s son, was John Ring. I call him a boy, for we all called him a boy, and we looked upon him as a boy, for he was undersized and underdeveloped so much so that he could not enlist.

“For some reason he was devoted to me, and he not only wanted to enlist, but he also wanted to be in the artillery company of which I was captain. I could only take him along as my servant. I didn’t want a servant, but it was the only way to take poor little Johnnie Ring.

“Johnnie was deeply religious, and would read the Bible every evening, before turning in. In those days I was an atheist, or at least thought I was, and I used to laugh at Ring, and after a while

he took to reading the Bible outside the tent on account of my laughing at him! But he did not stop reading it, and his faithfulness to me remained unchanged.

"The scabbard of my sword was too glittering for the regulations"—the ghost of a smile hovered on Conwell's lips—"and I could not wear it, and could only wear a plain one for service and keep this hanging in my tent on the tent-pole. John Ring used to handle it adoringly, and kept it polished to brilliancy. It's dull enough after these many years," he added somberly. To Ring it represented not only his captain, but the very glory and pomp of war.

"One day the Confederates suddenly stormed our position near New Berne and swept through the camp, driving our entire force before them. All, including my company, retreated hurriedly across the river, setting fire to a long wooden bridge as we went over. It soon blazed up furiously, making a barrier that the Confederates could not pass.

"Unknown to everybody, and unnoticed, John Ring had dashed back to my tent. I think he was able to make his way back because he looked like a mere boy. However that was, he got past the Confederates into my tent and took down, from where it was hanging on the tent-pole, my bright, gold-scabbarded sword.

"John Ring seized the sword that had long been so precious to him. He dodged here and there, and actually managed to gain the bridge just as it was beginning to blaze. He started across. The flames were every moment getting fiercer, the smoke denser, and now and then, as he crawled and staggered on, he leaned for a few seconds far over the bridge in an effort to get air. Both sides saw him; both sides watched his terrible progress, even while firing was fiercely kept up from each side of the river. And then a Confederate officer—he was one of General Pickett's officers—ran to the water's edge and waved a white handkerchief and the firing ceased.

"'Tell that boy to come back here!' he cried. 'Tell him to come back here and we will let him go free!'

"He called this out just as John Ring was about to enter upon the worst part of the bridge—the covered part, where there were top and bottom and sides of blazing wood. The roar of the flames was so close to Ring that he could not hear the calls from either side of the river, and he pushed desperately on and disappeared in the covered part.

"There was dead silence except for the crackling of the fire. Not a man cried out. All waited in hopeless expectancy. And then came a mighty yell from Northerner and Southerner alike, for Johnnie came crawling out of the end of the covered way—he had actually passed through that frightful place—and his clothes were ablaze, and he toppled over and fell into the shallow water. In a few moments he was dragged out unconscious, and hurried to a hospital.

"He lingered for a day or so, still unconscious, and then came to himself and smiled a little as he found that the sword for which he had given his life had been left beside him. He took it in his arms. He hugged it to his breast. He gave a few words of final message for me. And that was all."

In terms of "success speak," the life and death of Jesus Christ had all the markings of abject failure, just as did the previous story of John Ring. In John 12, a group of Greeks had come to interview Christ, at what was a turning point in His ministry. Rather than seizing the opportunity to promote health, happiness, and heaven on earth, Christ launched into a sermon on the great themes of His life—and of our lives, if we are to become greatly useful to Him. It was not a message that would endear the throngs to Him in that day, nor in this one.

### **Defeat—Later leading to victory**

"The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (John 12:23). In Christ's economy, crucifixion comes before glorification, and His glory would come by way of shame. Just as His ministry was about to expand, He was now facing what would seem to be a great defeat. Just ahead was the agony of Gethsemane, the sweating of

great drops of blood, an unjust trial, a crown of thorns, a brutal beating, and a cruel cross. Was Jesus defeated? Of course not. That cross was the route to victory over sin, death, and Satan. Likewise, our seeming defeats are but steppingstones to greater victories.

### **Death—Later leading to volume**

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). Of course, this passage is primarily referring to Jesus, yet it is a truth that runs through the entirety of nature and man. Just as the kernel of wheat must die and give itself if it is to multiply, so too must we die to ourselves if we are to see our lives multiply to the influence of others. Charles Spurgeon, commenting on this passage, said, "If we wish to achieve a great purpose, establish a great truth, and raise up a great agency for good, it must be by the surrender of ourselves, yea, of our

very lives to the one all-absorbing purpose. Death precedes growth. The Savior of others cannot save Himself. It is the law of divine husbandry that by death cometh increase." In the spiritual realm, great reproduction has been brought about through death, first Jesus Christ, then His followers, many of whom not only spiritually died to self, but also died physically themselves. Are we willing to validate our faith by "resisting unto blood"?

### **Denial—Later lead- ing to value**

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (v. 25). There must be a daily denial of self, and self must be displaced by Another. We can either be empty vessels "meet for the Master's use" or useless vessels full of our own desires and wants, but we can't be both. Hear Charles Spurgeon again, on this matter: "If you and I empty ourselves, depend on it, God will fill us. Divine grace seeks out and fills a vacuum. Make a vacuum by humility, and God will fill that vacuum by His love."

### **Directive—Later leading to valor**

"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve Me, him will my father honour" (v. 26). Note the sequence—following obediently, faithfully serving, then finally rewarded. How effective we are will be determined by how committed we are to following His directive. May we be found where He would have us be, doing all His bidding, cheerfully spending ourselves at His disposal and enjoying the Father's approval at the last!

May we also note that there is no immediate payoff mentioned in any of the above Scriptures. Our investment is made by faith, without thought of return in this life. Many a Christian has expected too much too quickly. Impatience with the infinite is irrational!

Hear Conwell as he continues relating the rest of the story of how one man impacted his life for time and eternity:

"When I stood beside the body of John Ring and

*And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour (John 12:23–26).*

realized that he had died for love of me, I made a vow that has formed my life. I vowed that from that moment I would live not only my own life, but that I would also live the life of John Ring. And from that moment I have worked sixteen hours every day—eight for John Ring's work and eight hours for my own."

A curious note had come into his voice, as of one who had run the race and neared the goal, fought the good fight and neared the end.

"Every morning when I rise I look at this sword, or if I am away from home I think of the sword, and vow anew that another day shall see sixteen hours of work from me." When one comes to know Russell Conwell he realizes that never did a man work harder and more constantly.

"It was through John Ring and his giving his life through devotion to me that I became a Christian," he went on. "This did not come about immediately, but it came before the war was over, and it came through faithful Johnnie Ring."

Seeming defeat, death to self, denial of ambition, directed by God—these are all characteristics of a life wholly given up to God that must, if the teachings of Christ mean anything, lead to eternal reward. We can't all be an apostle Peter, a Dwight L. Moody, a Martin Luther, or a Russell Conwell. But we all can be an Andrew, bringing a relative to Christ; an Edward Kimball, witnessing to a Sunday school pupil; a Jacob Trebonius, faithfully teaching young scholars; or a John Ring, a shining witness and contented servant. These "unknowns" were simply conduits to deliver a message to those, who, through the sovereignty of God, became great. May we deign to be humble servants and heralds through whom truth can travel to those who may aspire and ascend to greater heights than we in the Kingdom of our God.

Kerry James Allen is pastor of Fox River Baptist Church in Oswego, Illinois.

# A Killer Saved My Sister



*“And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear. . . .”  
(Jude 22, 23)*

**Terry K. Hagedorn**

Others save with fear?” How can we be told to “save” anyone? We cannot save anyone! We know that it is the Lord who must do the saving of the soul. What Jude was saying is that we can be used by God in His work to “save” others. And, in fact, it was in fulfillment of that promise, that a killer “saved” my sister.

I was born again in 1970. In 1973, God called me to preach and led me to Bob Jones University to prepare for the ministry.

I prayed and prayed for my entire family to be saved. I witnessed to them all. I led my younger sister to the Lord in 1973, and my mom was saved in the same year. Dad got saved in 1975. Only my older sister was not saved. I prayed for her. I witnessed to her. However, she always raised questions—difficult questions. My sister was a public school teacher, and, unfortunately, her secular education had turned her against the Bible.

I prayed that somehow I could get my sister to attend some intellectual debate or seminar about the Bible or creation. I rationalized, in my feeble carnal thinking, that if my sister could only hear intellectual arguments presented by Ph.D.’s and professors, then she would get saved.

My plan was well thought out, but it was *my* plan—not God’s. He chose to answer my prayer and save my sister in a most unusual way.

One of my regular ministry extensions was at the county jail in Spartanburg, South Carolina. A number of us “preacher boys” would meet on campus and then drive to the jail. Once there, we would meet with others from local area churches, pray, and then go into the jail to preach.

The jail had a large barred area called the “tank.” There were small cells with bunks off the back of the tank; however, the inmates spent their days sitting in the tank socializing.

This tank made holding preaching services very convenient. However, it made it unnecessary to have too many preachers at one tank. The first preacher there had a captive audience—all to himself. This jail had six such tanks.

One Sunday, all of the tanks were taken by other preachers. I felt like the fifth wheel on a wagon, so I went looking for someone to talk with one-on-one. As I walked along, I noticed a door that opened into a short hallway in front of an isolation cell. I looked around the corner of

the door. There was a man standing in the shadows of the cell. He looked angry and mean. He was shackled.

"Hello," I said. He said nothing. But if looks could kill . . . !

"Uhh . . . uhh . . . My name is Terry. I'm a preacher. We come down every Sunday to talk to men about their souls," I explained, "to warn them about hell and to tell them how to go to heaven."

He interrupted me, "Don't tell me about hell!" he hissed through clenched teeth. "I've been in hell for the last six years!"

I was set back by his cold words and callous delivery. I fumbled for words. Regaining my composure, I calmly said, "I don't know what prison is like, but I know prison is not hell. There is a place called 'hell,' and it is a place of eternal punishment. Sooner or later, one way or the other, you'll get out of this prison. But if you don't get saved, you'll go to hell forever—and you'll *never* get out."

With that, he turned away from me and went to the back of the cell. He cursed me and my religion. He told me to get out. The service was over, or so it seemed.

I started to walk away. But before I left, I took out a gospel tract and wrote my name and address on the back. I stuck it in the bars and said, "We don't come down here to hurt people. We want to help them. I am going to pray for you that you will be saved. I have left a gospel tract in the door. Please read it. I wrote my name on it. Write me if I can ever be of any help." I turned and walked away.

There was no word from the angry man in the shackles. However, I did not forget him. For the next couple of weeks, every time I walked past that door, I remembered my encounter with the angry man. I prayed that he would be saved and not go to hell—the real hell.

Then one day I received a letter. It was written in pencil. I did not recognize the name on the return address, but I saw that it was from the Correctional Center in Columbia, South Carolina.

It was three pages long. It was signed by a man named Melvin. It started, "Dear Terry, I met you at the Spartanburg County jail. Do you remember me? I was in an isolation cell. [How could I forget?] I am sorry for what I said and the way I acted. I read the paper you gave me. I did what it said, and I got saved."

I could not believe it! It was a miracle! I praised God as I read the rest of the letter. Melvin had been raised by his grandparents. He said that they were saved people and that they had prayed for him to be saved "all the time." But he had rebelled. He became a bouncer in a bar. One night, he got drunk and took some pills.

In a drunken stupor he went berserk, believing that his two friends were plotting to kill him. He pulled a gun and shot and killed them both. He received two life sentences, plus 40 years for an attempted escape.

Melvin had been brought to Spartanburg from another prison only temporarily to attend his grandfather's funeral on Saturday. He was returned to his original prison

early the following Monday. Thank God that he kept that tract.

Over the next few months, I visited Melvin. He no longer called prison "hell." Instead, he developed a burden for others. He was made a plumber's assistant. He rejoiced because that gave him the opportunity to witness to others. Over the next few months, 14 men were saved. We gave the men Bibles and study materials. Melvin and I wrote back and forth. He shared his prayer requests, and I shared mine, including my burden for my sister. He always mentioned her in his prayers.

Then one day, he asked me if he could write a letter to her. I had mixed feelings about giving my sister's address to him. He didn't exactly fit my plan. Melvin could hardly write. His spelling was atrocious. How would my sister react to having a convict write her a letter from prison?

But Melvin was my brother in the Lord. I had asked him to pray for her. He was a soul winner. *But he was a convicted murderer!*

*Now you've done it, Terry,* I thought to myself. *She will be so turned off that she'll never be saved.* But what could I do? I gave him the address and then waited for a call from my sister, which I expected to receive the day that she received Melvin's letter. I expected her to be angry. I expected a lot of things, but I never expected what happened.

"Terry?" she asked as soon as I answered the phone.

"Joey! What a pleasant surprise!" I responded.

"Terry, I just received a letter from, uh, Melvin." Her voice trailed off. I thought it trailed off in anger and disgust.

"Oh, a letter from Melvin. Joey, I can explain." Silence. "Joey, are you okay?" I asked.

"Yes, Terry. Never better!" she stated. "Terry, I got saved! I understand what you've been trying to tell me all these years."

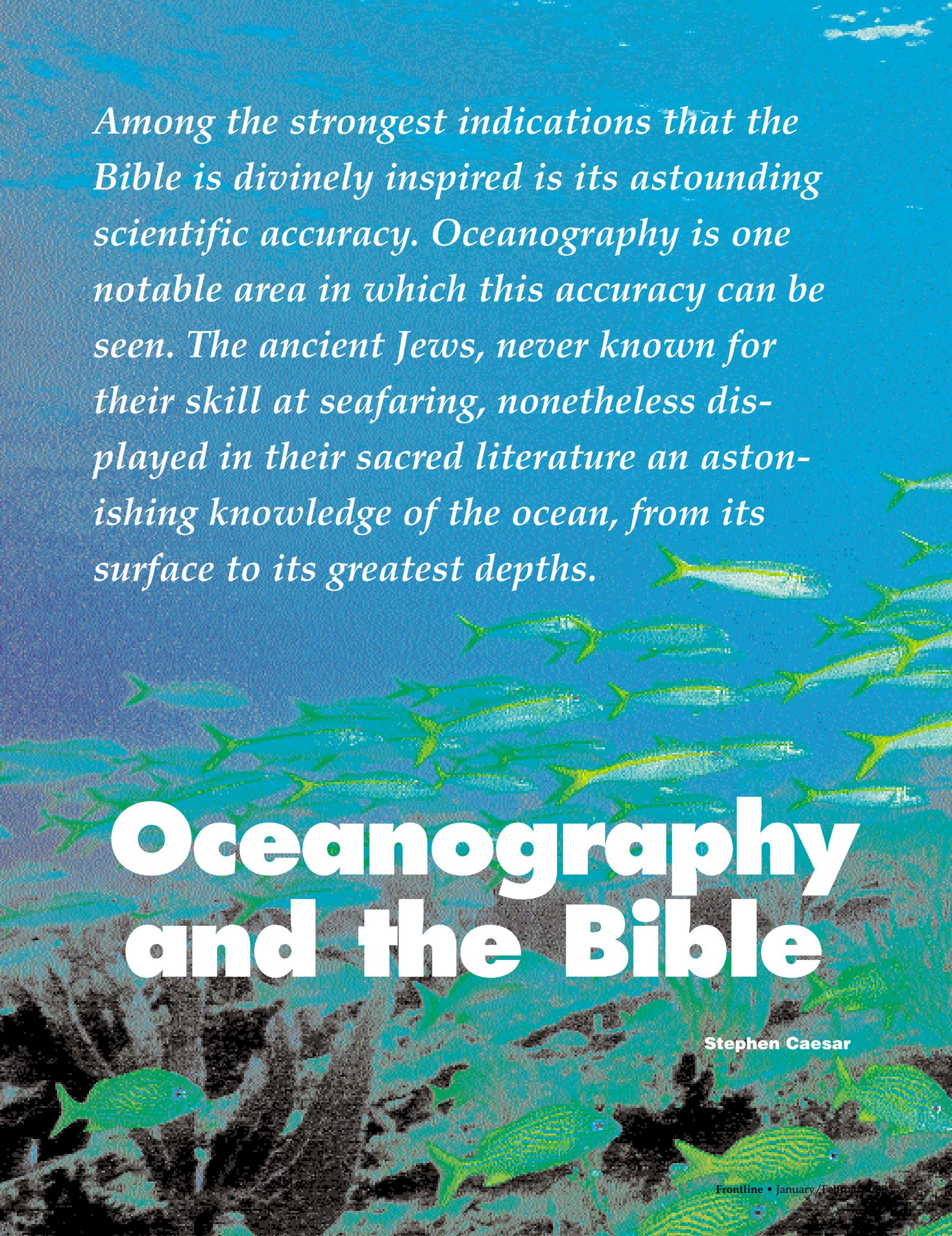
She explained that as she had read Melvin's letter, God had convicted her heart not only by what Melvin had said, but by how he had said it. Melvin had given his personal testimony to her. He had asked her to please bow her head, right then and there, and confess to God her sin and to receive Christ as Savior—and she had done it!

Oh, how I rejoiced that God had saved my sister! It was not Melvin. It was not me. It would not have been a professor. It was God. He used me, a preacher boy, and Melvin, a murderer, to save my sister. How I marveled at His wisdom and His ways!

My sister did not need to hear an intellectual argument from a university professor. She needed to hear the gospel from the lips of a convicted—but converted—murderer. Thus, a killer "saved" my sister!

Truly, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:8).

Terry K. Hagedorn is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Reedsville, West Virginia.



*Among the strongest indications that the Bible is divinely inspired is its astounding scientific accuracy. Oceanography is one notable area in which this accuracy can be seen. The ancient Jews, never known for their skill at seafaring, nonetheless displayed in their sacred literature an astonishing knowledge of the ocean, from its surface to its greatest depths.*

# Oceanography and the Bible

Stephen Caesar

An example of the Bible's oceanographic knowledge can be found in Job 38:16, which asks rhetorically: "Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?" It was not until the 20th century that the existence of springs at the bottom of the ocean was confirmed by empirical observation. Two specially designed deep-sea vessels, the *Alvin* and the *Cyana*, were used to give mankind the first glimpse of what God had revealed to Job thousands of years ago. Frank Press of the National Academy of Sciences and Raymond Siever of Harvard describe the discovery:

During dives of *Alvin* in 1977, hot springs and hydrothermally (hot-water) produced mounds of iron-rich clay minerals and manganese dioxide were discovered on the Galápagos spreading ridge near the equator just west of South America. In 1978 the *Cyana* dove to the East Pacific rise at 21 degrees north latitude, south of the mouth of the Gulf of California, and discovered large deposits of iron-zinc-copper sulfides. In 1979, *Alvin*, accompanied by ANGUS, a sophisticated survey camera, and Deep Tow, a powerful array of geophysical sensors, also went to the 21 degrees N area and found the active, ore-carrying hot springs at temperatures of 350 degrees C. These were the "black smokers," mineral chimneys precipitated as waters from hot springs mix with the surrounding sea water.<sup>1</sup>

The November 1994 issue of *National Geographic* added: "Thousands of hot springs occur along the East Pacific Rise, part of the 46,600-mile world-circling Mid-Ocean Ridge, where plates separate and ocean floor forms."<sup>2</sup> The authors of the article, describing the springs firsthand, recounted that "water gushed from the seafloor, revealing startling and ever changing characteristics. . . . [T]he fluid was almost fresh, bearing only one-twelfth the salt of normal seawater."<sup>3</sup>

Examples of the oceanographic accuracy of the Bible go beyond the Book of Job. For instance, in 2 Samuel 22:16 David mentions "the channels of the sea." The word "channel" in the original Hebrew is *'âphâyq*, meaning a ravine through which a brook or stream runs. Isaiah 8:7 uses the same word in both English and Hebrew in this literal, geological sense. Thus, David is referring to actual ravines in the sea. Press and Siever confirm the correctness of David's statement: "Most of the surface [of the ocean floor] is fairly uneven, with small hills and ridges alternating with basinlike depressions, broad valley-like troughs, and occasional narrow, steep-walled valleys called **submarine canyons**."<sup>4</sup> [emphasis original]

Another instance of David's knowledge of oceanography can be seen in Ps. 8:8, which mentions "the paths of the seas." It is interesting that David, who hails from an ancient people not known for their seafaring ways, should know about ocean currents,

which serve as pathways on which ships travel. One of the founding fathers of modern oceanography, Matthew Fontaine Maury, was among the first scientists to take this verse literally; his book on ocean currents remains seminal to this day. Over a hundred years ago he wrote of the Gulf Stream, that most famous of "paths of the seas":

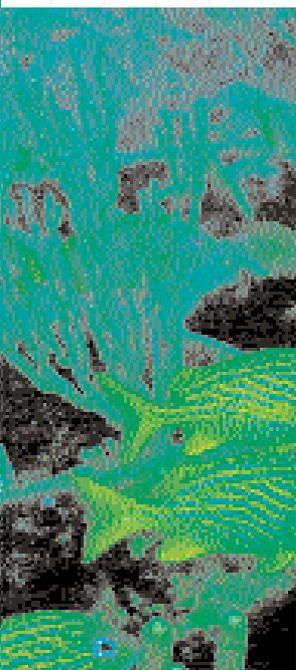
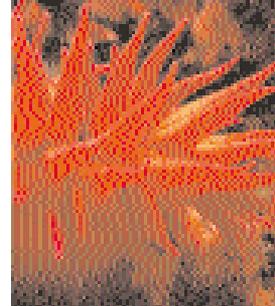
There is a river in the ocean. In the severest droughts it never fails, and in the mightiest floods it never overflows. Its banks and its bottom are of cold water, while its current is of warm [water]. . . . There is in the world no other such majestic flow of waters. Its current is more rapid than the Mississippi or the Amazon, and its volume more than a thousand times greater. Its waters, as far out from the gulf as the Carolina coasts, are of indigo blue. They are so distinctly marked that their line of junction with the common sea water may be traced by the eye. Often one-half of the vessel may be perceived floating in Gulf Stream water, while the other half is in common water of the sea—so sharp is the line, and such the want [lack] of affinity between those waters, and such, too, the reluctance, so to speak, on the part of those of the Gulf Stream to mingle with the littoral waters of the sea.<sup>5</sup>

David's wisest son also possessed oceanographic knowledge beyond the ancient era in which he lived. In Ecclesiastes 1:6–7 Solomon wrote: "The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again." This ocean-centered, earth-wide system of interconnected wind and water is known to modern science as the hydrologic cycle.

Press and Siever write:

Not only is our planet very watery, but gravity ensures that it will stay that way. Although much water is moved around from one place to another, the total is conserved. The **hydrologic cycle** is a simplified description of the ways in which waters move from one place to another and of the amounts transported.

The external heat engine of Earth, powered by the sun, drives the hydrologic cycle at the surface. It does so mainly by evaporating water from the surface of the warm oceans of the tropics and transporting it by winds, themselves driven by the temperature differences between the hot and cold parts of the globe. The water in the atmosphere condenses to clouds and eventually falls as rain or snow [Job 36:27–28]. Much of the rain soaks into the ground by **infiltration** to form **groundwater** [Is. 55:10a]. What does not soak in collects as **runoff**, which finds its way into streams and rivers and runs back into the oceans [Ec. 1:7]. Some of the water in the ground



may return directly to the atmosphere by evaporating through the soil surface.<sup>6</sup> [emphases original]

Jonah was equally as knowledgeable as Job, David, and Solomon regarding the features of the ocean; in his case, he knew about undersea mountains. Describing his traumatic experience in the stomach of a great fish, the prophet wrote: "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains" (Jonah 2:5-6a).

Press and Siever state:

Isolated subsea mountains with the same shape as volcanoes are found rising from the ocean floor. The **seamounts**, like volcanic islands, may occur as clusters or chains; where closely spaced, chains of seamounts merge to become **aseismic ridges**. Many seamounts have flat tops formed by erosion of the volcano top during emergence; such seamounts are called **guyots** (named for the first professor of geology at Princeton University). All of these volcanic mountains are produced by plates riding over hot spots in the mantle, regions where basalt is steadily rising.<sup>7</sup> [emphases original]

These oceanographic facts do not come from knowledge based on what can be seen with the natural eye.

Rather, they are facts that have only been discovered in recent times with the aid of modern technology and scientific discovery. Since the Old Testament was written many centuries ago, long before the advent of the technology necessary to discover these facts, the serious investigator of Scripture must ask himself, From where did this astonishing scientific knowledge come? An honest answer (putting aside aliens, time-travelers, and lucky guesses) will reveal that the Bible contains scientific knowledge millennia ahead of its time because its ultimate author was God rather than man.

Stephen Caesar is currently pursuing his master's degree in anthropology/archaeology at Harvard University.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Frank Press & Raymond Siever, *Earth*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1982), 255.

<sup>2</sup> Richard A. Lutz & Rachel M. Haymon, "Rebirth of a Deep-sea Vent," *National Geographic* 186, no. 5 (1994): 117.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>4</sup> Press & Siever, *op. cit.*, 246.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Ross R. Olney, *The Inquiring Mind: Oceanography* (Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1969), 22-23.

<sup>6</sup> Press & Siever, *op. cit.*, 130-131.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

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The year 2000 is bringing with it plans for Fundamentalists to cooperate in a number of evangelistic efforts. Area-wide revival campaigns, joint church-planting projects, and new missionary ventures are bringing separatists together.

Fundamentalists have historically had reservations about working with other churches. The unscriptural compromise of Billy Graham's "cooperative evangelism" made many skittish of united campaigns. Our withdrawal from denominational associations and programs in order to separate from heresy (Rom. 16:17) left us with a suspicion of religious alliances.

As we approach the new century, the religious scene in our country seems more complicated than ever. Policies of cooperation and separation developed 30 years ago fail to address some of the situations we now face. As always, Christians must turn to the teachings of Scripture to determine how to handle the challenges of life. In the Second Epistle of John we find principles that will safely guide us into Christian cooperation that pleases God and guard us against wicked alliances that offend Him.

The theme of 2 John is "love in the truth" (verse 1). The book is a letter addressing a situation familiar to preachers that contend for the Faith. An elderly lady with a kind heart had been helping people she should not have been helping. She had been housing and feeding not only faithful proclaimers of the true gospel, but also the false prophets who claimed to be Christian ministers. Like many kindly widows today, she was lacking in discernment, and needed instruction about the relationship between "truth and love" (verse 3).

### Truth May Be Known

The great problem of our day is that the very existence of knowable truth is disputed. Every opinion of philosophy, religion, or politics is weighed as an unverifiable proposal, and there is no room in many minds for indisputable absolutes. We must remind ourselves again and again that this way of thinking is wrong. There is such a thing as truth, and truth may be known.

John, the last living apostle of Jesus, wrote: "The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth" (verse 1). The Lord Jesus Christ taught us that truth will be discerned by the man whose will is submitted to God: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

Known truth is the most important factor in a Christian's life. It comes to us by divine revelation, verbal inspiration, and spiritual illumination (see 1 Corinthians 2). We must learn it, proclaim it, and hold on to it. John wrote

this epistle "for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever" (verse 2).

### Truth and Love Are Inseparable

John makes it clear that loyalty to the truth and love for others are not mutually exclusive qualities. In fact, throughout this epistle truth and love have the closest possible connection (see verses 1, 3, 5, 6). Obedience to the truth requires love. True love requires obedience to the truth. Love without truth is not Biblical love. Truth without love is not Biblical truth.

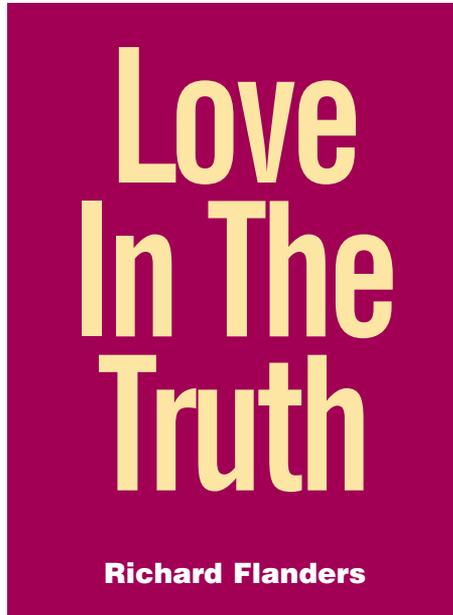
Some years ago, a sincere Fundamentalist pastor told me that he would rather be "too separated than not separated enough." He would prefer to err by breaking fellowship incorrectly with a brother than to risk fellowshiping with some he ought to shun. That approach is a cop-out. Our Lord's command that we "love one another" (John 13:34-35, 15:12) is just as binding as the command to "beware of false prophets" (Matt. 7:15). Do we imagine that the Lord will excuse our disobedience of one command because of our preference to keep another? God is both Light and Love (1 John 1:5, 4:8). Just because it takes effort and discernment to maintain the balance of love and truth does not mean that we are excused from seeking that balance. Defenders of truth must be loving as much as lovers of the brethren must

stay loyal to the truth.

### Truth Is To Be Lived as Well as Believed

The lady's children not only knew the truth (verse 1); they also lived the truth (verse 4). This principle of "walking in truth" is at the root of the Biblical teaching about practical holiness and marks a key distinction between Fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Most evangelicals today are satisfied to believe and to teach sound doctrine, but fail to observe the practical obligations that orthodoxy places upon its adherents.

People are shocked to learn that the popular radio and television preacher who has served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention publicly defends the toleration of serious false doctrine at convention seminaries and colleges. He denounces liberalism over the airwaves, but advocates the use of liberal professors in theological education. The most famous evangelist of our generation has courted the sponsorship of men who reject nearly all the truth he preached. Any sensible person can see the inconsistency of this, and any Christian familiar with the Scripture must know that God forbids such duplicity. *Believers* in the truth must *walk* in the truth. Participation in inter-church activities and endorsement of parachurch ministries must never be maintained at the expense of our allegiance to the truth in creed and conduct.



## Truth Must Guide Love

Look carefully at the relationship between truth and love in 2 John 6-11 and you will notice that truth is the dominant principle in the relationship. Genuine, Biblical love always prompts obedience to truth.

For years evangelicals have gathered under the banner that “doctrine divides, but love unites.” This sets love and doctrine (i.e., truth) against each other and exalts love as better than truth. That love is illicit that is disloyal to the truth. Paul reminds us that love never rejoices in iniquity but always only in truth (1 Cor. 13:6). The Bible teaches us that all expressions of love must be directed and defined by the truth we know. We “love in the truth” when we allow the truth of God’s Word to draw the borders of our Christian fellowship.

Love demands that we “walk after” God’s commandments, which we “have heard from the beginning” (verse 6). Jude 3 likewise exhorts us to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and Paul reminds believers that “any other gospel . . . than that ye have received” is a perversion of the truth (Gal. 1:6-9). New doctrine is false doctrine and is not to be followed. We must beware, John adds, “for many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (verse 7). The deceivers are not to be joined or helped or encouraged in any way (verses 8-11). The truth puts restrictions on our expressions of love.

The New Testament teaching of separation is twofold—separation from the people of darkness (unbelievers) and separation from the works of darkness (whether practiced by unbelievers or believers). “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14). “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove

them” (Eph. 5:11).

In order to be lovingly loyal to the truth of God, I must refuse to be “yoked together” in any spiritual endeavor with those who reject the gospel. I must also never endorse or participate in anyone’s disobedience to God. Isn’t it obvious that meaningful allegiance to the truth will guide and limit our cooperation in religious work? We cannot work with unbelievers, and we cannot endorse the errors even of fellow-believers. But that does not mean that we should not love other believers in the gospel and to express that love in every way possible without giving up or compromising the truth.

*Isn't it obvious that meaningful allegiance to the truth will guide and limit our cooperation in religious work?*

A born-again Pentecostal pastor in our area (and a good soul winner too!) came to my office to ask me to help him bear a burden he was carrying. We prayed together earnestly. Yet, as he left my office, I realized that praying together might be the most we could do together for Christ in the light of our serious doctrinal differences.

The areas of agreement (fundamentals, denominational distinctives, convictions) determine the level of cooperation that is appropriate, and the degree of agreement in those areas generally determine the level of cooperation that is possible. The key is to “love in the truth.”

Doctrine does divide. Romans 16:17 makes it very clear that doctrinal differences are a necessary cause of division; however, it is not those who separate that cause the division, but those whose doctrine or behavior necessitates the separation: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark *them which cause divisions and offences* contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” Notice again that truth (“the doctrine which you have learned”) is the determining factor. Love does unite, but only where truth allows.

## Truth Is an Expression of Love

Second John 11 warns that whoever

bids a false teacher “Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds.” Those who encourage a heretic by associating with him are not showing love toward him! They are helping him stay in darkness. Those who stand for the truth against his false doctrine are loving him better than those who cooperate with him. Will evangelistic campaigns or denominational programs that honor liberals as Christian ministers win the infidel to the truth? It doesn’t happen that way. The Fundamentalist who reproveth false doctrine has the greater chance of convincing the gainsayers. It is not unloving to insist upon the truth. It is the most loving way to approach teachers of falsehood.

Let us not miss the chance to work together for the cause of Christ in the coming years! May we never betray the truth for the love of man and never forget to love when we stand for truth. May God help us in the new century to learn how to “love in the truth.”

Dr. Richard Flanders is pastor Juniata Baptist Church in Vassar, Michigan.

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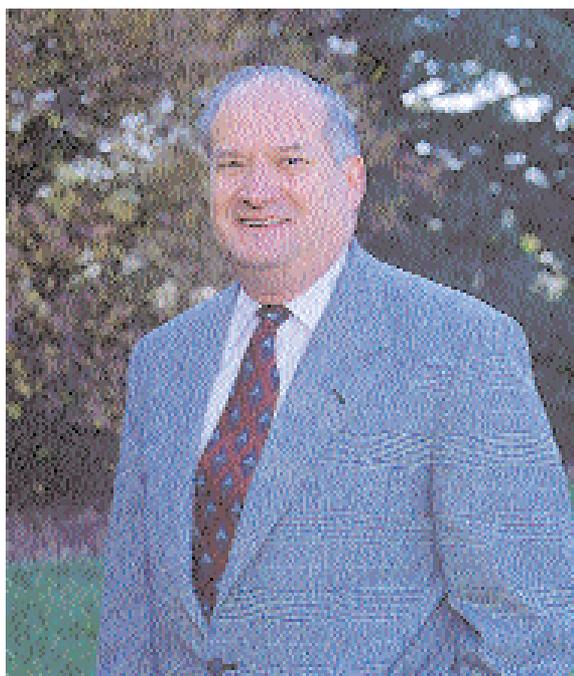
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Rev. Lin Croxton  
Evangelist based in Simpsonville, SC

"My wife and I have been privileged to minister with many GFA missionaries, and we have been impressed with the thoroughness of their ministries. They are not content with conversions alone, but they seek to put into practice II Timothy 2:2, 'And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.'"



**Gospel Fellowship Association**  
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## Caribbean Regional FBF Conference

Calvary Baptist Tabernacle of Carolina, Puerto Rico, hosted the Caribbean Regional FBF Conference October 1–15, 1999, providing housing and meals for 125 nationals from 21 countries. All classes at Calvary Baptist Bible College were canceled because the 27 students from 18 countries were attending the meetings and working to ensure the comfort of all guests.

Speakers from the U. S. included Dr. Rod Bell, Pastor Bob Crawford, Evangelist Lin Croxton, Dr. Bill Hayes, Dr. Sam Horn, Dr. Bob Jones III, Dr. Matt Olson, Dr. Don Richards, and Dr. John Vaughn. Daily ladies' sessions were held by Mrs. Lenore Bell, Mrs. Beneth Jones, and Mrs. Brenda Vaughn. Speakers from the islands included pastors Carl Naitram (Barbados), Keithley Saunders (St. Kitts), Rafael Rodriguez (Dominican Republic), and Juan Carlos Fernandez (Puerto Rico). More than 200 attended the day sessions, and each evening hundreds more packed the auditorium, necessitating separate services for more than 200 young people and teenagers.

To accommodate the crowd on the last day of the conference, 250 chairs and a large-screen video display were set up outside the auditorium. Potent messages and an unusual awareness of the presence of the Lord had the services running into the late evening hours. Conference leaders sensed that something special was occurring as numerous persons asked forgiveness of those they had offended; others, testifying of a new awareness of the claims of God upon their lives answered His call for service. Twenty-nine were saved, and dozens more made other decisions for Christ.

Dr. Johnny Daniels, host pastor and FBF Caribbean Region moderator, expressed his appreciation for the privilege of hosting the conference

and announced that in lieu of a regional meeting next year, the FBF Caribbean country representatives voted to support the Caribbean Congress of Fundamentalists planned for September 18–21, 2000. This meeting will also be held at the Calvary Baptist Tabernacle in Carolina, Puerto Rico.

## Articles Needed

*Frontline* is always interested in receiving manuscripts, especially practical non-fiction and seasonal articles. If you would like to submit articles for publication, we encourage you first to read our "Guidelines for Writers." We'll be happy to send them to you by mail or e-mail, or you can read them on the *Frontline* web pages under "About Us."

## Looking for "Case" Books

We are looking for copies of two of the well-known "Case" books by Dr. Chester E. Tulga. They are *The Case Against the National Council of Churches* and *The Case for Dispensationalism*. If you have either of these booklets and would allow us to photocopy or buy them, please contact our office.

## Missionaries Love Frontline!

Dr. Tom Knauf, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Marina, California, recently shared with us a letter he received from a missionary in the Philippines: "Thank you for subscribing for us to *Frontline*. . . . It was really a pleasant surprise for us. [Our son] grabbed it immediately before I could read an article in it. I kept following it up but before it reached my hand, our daughter beat me to it. They are researching materials they could use, especially [my daughter], who teaches at a local Bible school. She is so happy for timely materials

for her ministry. [My wife] and I will be sharing during a Bible conference . . . and will be using some of the materials from *Frontline*."

Your missionaries want and need *Frontline*. Last November Faith Baptist Church in Pekin, Illinois, subscribed for 11 of their missionaries. A subscription to *Frontline* is one of the best gifts you can give to your missionaries.

## Additions to FBF Web Site

Sermons by Earle E. Matteson, G. Beauchamp Vick, Tom Malone, and David L. Cummins are now posted at the FBF web site. These messages were preached at the 1971 FBF national meeting at Calvary Baptist Church in Watertown, Wisconsin.

## Upcoming FBF Meetings

**March 6–7**  
**Mid-Atlantic Region**  
Faith Baptist Church  
809 Greenbag Road  
Morgantown, WV 26508  
(304) 292-9872

**April 17–19**  
**Southeast Region**  
Faith Memorial Baptist Church  
6202 Strathmore Rd.  
Richmond, VA 23234  
(804) 743-1056

**June 13–15**  
**National Meeting**  
Faith Baptist Church  
500 West Lee Rd.  
Taylors, SC 29687  
(864) 322-0700

If you know of other FBF meetings scheduled in the year 2000, please contact us so we can announce them in an upcoming issue and post them on the FBF web site.

# SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

## First Partaker

### Kindling to Stoke a Burning Heart

*Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?*

Over a quarter of a century ago, Wilbur Smith, one of the world's foremost authorities on religious books, told of speaking in a large evangelical church whose gifted pastor had been preaching for 25 years. Having had the opportunity of looking over the man's library, Smith remarked with some surprise that he didn't see any volumes on the life and work of Jesus Christ.

Smith's observation seemed to take the pastor off guard, but after checking for himself the man acknowledged that he did not own a book on the subject. Smith related this incident not because it was rare, but because he had observed a strange phenomenon among ministers—what he called "the mysterious neglect of studying the life of Jesus Christ."

If such a neglect exists, it isn't for lack of choice material. A quick check of the top shelf behind me finds nearly 100 volumes on various aspects of the life and ministry of Christ, and that's in addition to the 125 or so commentaries on the Gospels on the shelf below it and the more than 50 volumes of Christology in the bookcase of doctrinal works across the room. But what I've collected through the years is only a small sample of what's available. Before me even as I write is a volume entitled *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, done by Samuel Gardiner Ayres (librarian of Drew Theological Seminary) in 1906,

which annotates and classifies over 5,000 English titles on Christ. And Smith estimated Ayres' work contained just about half of the works authored on this subject in English during the last two hundred years, not to mention those published in German, French, Italian, and other European languages!

*"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits" (2 Tim. 2:6)*

Let's suppose that a pastor was willing to put himself to some trouble to develop a really first class section in his library on the life and ministry of our Lord. I'd like to devote this and next issue's column to some personal recommendations, categorized according to the particular aspect of our Lord's life and ministry upon which the works focus. Thankfully, most are currently in print. Some will have to be searched out through used book dealers. A select few are the rare treasures a really book-loving man would part with a whole case of shotgun shells to get his hands on.

### Harmonies

I will never forget the delight with which I first read a harmony of the Gospels. It would not be an overstatement to say that I had only the sketchiest conception of the sequence of events in our Lord's ministry until I became acquainted with these indispensable works. How many of us, for instance, have observed in our reading of the Gospels individually that our Lord was the object of six sabbath controversies and that they occurred chronologically in two clusters of three each? Or how many of us knew that He endured not one, or two, or three, but six hearings or trials before His crucifixion, or that He appeared to His disciples no less than five times on the first day of His resurrection? These are the kinds of vital keys to interpretation that a harmony turns up.

Harmonies are of two types. One weaves the four Gospel accounts together in a continuous narrative

### Inside

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and is called a *diatessaron*, and the other prints the four in parallel columns wherever they record the same or similar material. Most students of the Gospels much prefer the latter type, so I'll limit my recommendations to it.

My favorite is *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Moody Press) by Robert Thomas and Stanley Gundry, due to the detailed footnotes and the 12 essays in the back that discuss everything from the history of the production of harmonies to the reconciliation of the genealogies in Matthew and Luke. The book is also well bound and lays flat—no little consideration if you carry it into the pulpit for reference (something I've done many times while preaching on the events of the Passion Week in particular).

For purposes of comparison on finer points of chronology, I like the older work done by John Broadus, one of the founding professors of the first

A. Criswell, who pastored First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, for more than 40 years. Criswell once began a series following a harmony through the life of Christ. But after awhile he grew increasingly uneasy that it was taking too long to reach the Passion Week and Resurrection. He concluded that the Holy Spirit had produced four Gospels, not one, so that the reader would be brought relatively quickly to the death and resurrection of Christ again, and again, yet again, and still again. Confessing to the congregation his mistake in departing from preaching the Gospels individually, he abandoned the harmony!

## Full-Length Lives of Christ

The first choice for helpfulness has to be J. Dwight Pentecost's *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. Issued in 1981, after Pentecost had taught this subject for some 30 years on both the college and seminary levels, the work has three features that I especially like. First, it is written by a dispensational premillennialist. Second, it has 65 pages of appendices on subjects such as the geography, historical background, and religious background to our Lord's ministry that are alone almost worth the price of the book. Third, and most helpful of all, are the extensive contributions from scores of other, primarily older, writers. Nearly every page includes a full paragraph or two of choice quoted material. Most reflect warm attachment to the person of the Savior. One caution is that Pentecost holds to a postponed view of the Kingdom, but since many pastors do so as well Pentecost's position on this will be for them merely a fourth good reason for owning this work of unparalleled usefulness.

If I might have just one other volume on Christ's life in addition to Pentecost's, it would be Samuel J. Andrews' *The Life of Our Lord Upon the Earth*. James Family Christian Publishing reissued this classic some 20 years ago, but unfortunately, it is now once again out of print. Devout and meticulously researched, Andrews' work explores subjects overlooked by most writers. Here are more than 50 interesting pages on the dates of our Lord's birth, baptism, and death. Here are five possible reconstructions of the order of events leading up to the marriage at Cana. Ever thought about the positioning of the apostles around the table at the last supper? Andrews sorts through it. Need a chart comparing the Gospel accounts of Peter's denials? There's one on page 518 of my reprint. No wonder that Andrews' volume has been called "indispensable to any one who intends a thorough study of the subject."

No collection of books on the life of Christ is complete without Alfred Edersheim's monumental *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. Wilbur Smith called it "the most important general work

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## Wilbur Smith had observed a strange phenomenon among ministers—what he called “the mysterious neglect of studying the life of Jesus Christ.”

Southern Baptist seminary organized in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1859. This original work was revised by his son-in-law, A. T. Robertson, in 1922, and was for decades a standard in the field. It still warrants respectful consideration.

Those looking for an even more finely focused harmony will want to take a look at *The Horizontal Line Synopsis of the Gospels* by Reuben J. Swanson. The format parallels the Scripture in horizontal lines rather than vertical columns. Similarities and differences stand out immediately, giving the preacher instant recognition of how the Gospels complement one another, not only in a given passage, but line by line and word by word. The approach so breaks up the continuity of the accounts, however, that continuous reading is almost impossible.

One further work that has occasionally saved me an immense amount of trouble when comparing, not the English, but the Greek text of the Gospels, is *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, edited by Kurt Aland. Aland places the Greek text (Nestle-Aland) in parallel columns on the left page and the English text (Revised Standard Version) on the right, enabling those a little rusty with their Greek to make their way around reasonably well. It's not for everyone, but for those who need such a specialized tool Aland has performed a great service.

One caution that should be shared about pastoral use of harmonies comes out of the experience of W.

on the life of Christ in our language.” Edersheim, a Jew by birth, was converted under the ministry of the Scottish Presbyterian, John Duncan (otherwise known affectionately as *Rabbi Duncan*) while he was studying at the University of Pesth in Hungary. Dr. Duncan’s Hebrew and classical learning combined with the deepest piety and most intense love for Jews brought the young scholar under his influence until at last the contact ripened into an open confession of Christ in public baptism.

Edersheim subsequently studied theology at New College, Edinburgh, and was ordained a minister of the Presbyterian church. Out of seven years of the most prodigious study he wrote a life of Christ that is deeply reverent, finely worded, and above all, unique in its exploration of the Jewish culture and religious thought within which our Lord lived. The work abounds in illuminating quotations from rabbinical literature that would be otherwise inaccessible to the average pastor. Here are the 456 Old Testament passages applied by the Rabbis to the Messiah. Here is a detailed discussion of the rabbinic traditions concerning Messiah’s forerunner. Here is a wonderfully researched presentation of the ordinances for sabbath observance practiced by the Jews. All of this is fine grist for the preacher’s mill. Do not, however, settle for the abridged one-volume edition in order to pinch pennies. The abridgment is money wasted, not saved.

The largest life of Christ of which I am aware is John Peter Lange’s *The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ* in four volumes (each of which runs to over 500 well-packed pages). Smith described it as “profound, theological, reverent, tremendously suggestive, occasionally perhaps a little tedious, but never failing to move and inspire the careful reader.” Cyril Barber (in *The Minister’s Library*) said it abounds “with information that will delight the heart of the pastor.” One thing for sure that I’ve found in using my set—if every other author is sketchy in his treatment of a passage, Lange unfailingly produces some well-expressed help.

A work that really ought to be much better known is Cunningham Geikie’s *The Life and Words of Christ*. The content is considerably enriched by descriptions of Holy Land sites from Geikie’s own travels there, but my heart is particularly warmed by his richly devotional handling of our Lord’s sayings. For instance, consider the profound insight of his comments on the words, “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23):

Words like these marked an epoch in the spiritual history of the world; a revolution in all previous ideas of the relation of man to his Maker. . . . The worth of man’s homage to God does not depend on the place where it is paid. The true worship has its temple in the inmost soul; in the

spirit and heart. It is the life of the soul; it is communion with God; the reverent espousal of our nature to truth. It is spiritual and moral, not outward and ritual; springing from the great truth, rightly apprehended, which Jesus had first uttered, that God is Spirit. . . . The universal presence of a spiritual God made the whole world alike His shrine. The veil of the Temple was first rent at Jacob’s Well, and He Who, till then, had, as men thought, dwelt only in the narrow limits of the chamber it shrouded, went forth thence, from that hour, to consecrate all the earth as one great Holy of Holies.

That’ll preach.

I’ve recommended the lengthiest life of Christ and should, perhaps, at least mention one of the briefest. *The Life of Jesus Christ*, by James Stalker, is perhaps the shortest work you’ll see (142 pages of text in the Zondervan reprint). But exhibiting as it does Stalker’s gift for condensation combined with genuine love for the subject, it richly repays an

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***We preachers sometimes think that our people are less interested when we preach on the life of Christ than when we deal with some practical subject of Christian living. But we ought to ask ourselves whether our preaching Christ’s birth, or his miracles, or His resurrection had anything fresh in it.***

evening’s reading. As a sample, have you ever seen a pithier introduction to the infancy narratives than this?

Augustus was sitting on the throne of the Roman empire, and the touch of his finger could set the machinery of government in motion over almost all the civilized world. He was proud of his power and wealth, and it was one of his favorite occupations to compile a register of the populations and revenues of his vast dominions. So he issued an edict, as the Evangelist Luke says, “that all the world should be taxed. . . .

The factual accuracy and delicate artistry of those first two sentences meld seamlessly in a narration that we preachers would do well to add to our portfolios of preaching styles.

### **Surveys of Events in the Life of Christ**

There are a few handlings of the life of Christ that concentrate on its primary events or mainly

focus upon certain subjects that crop up repeatedly throughout its history. The classic in this regard is G. Campbell Morgan's *The Crises of the Christ*. Following a preliminary analysis of man's present condition (distanced from God by sin, ignorant of God through sin, and unlike God in sin), Morgan develops in his inimitable way what he calls the

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***The great benefit will be what happens in our own souls when we let a master in Israel introduce us to the Savior we've never known like this before.***

seven crisis events in our Lord's earthly life (birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension). After reading Morgan's works for more than 25 years now, I would call this his greatest work. On some pages one is tempted to underline every statement. It is the kind of work I would like to be able to reread every couple of years. When it comes to preaching these seven events with the depth of spiritual insight of which they are worthy, Morgan's work is nearly indispensable. Before you suspect that I'm exaggerating, read Morgan for yourself. You just might commend it more highly than I have!

Another matchless work along this same line was done by Alexander Whyte, the venerable old Scottish Presbyterian. *The Walk, Conversation and Character of Jesus Christ Our Lord* consists of 35 messages spun with the fine wool of Whyte's perceptive insight and painstaking attention to style. Just a short sample cannot do justice to Whyte's style, but it will at least illustrate his insights. For instance, note a portion of his handling of the name "Jesus," given, as the angel revealed to Joseph, because He would save His people from their sins.

Our names are debts that we owe to those who know our name. Every man owes to himself and to others the signification of his name, and of all his names. . . . Every new addition of name, or of office, or of honour, lays a new debt and a new obligation on a man. . . . This new name that the angel gave to Joseph and Mary to give to their Child on the day of His

circumcision lays Him under this debt to me to save me from my sins. . . . He must deny both His circumcision and His circumcision name, and all His errand here, if He does not save you from all your sins. But He is not ashamed to bear that name, both on earth and in heaven, because He has never turned His back on any seeking sinner, and never will.

How about a selection of lessons out of the life of Christ that are pointed particularly at preachers? I like anything that William Blaikie (professor in New College, Edinburgh, from 1868–1897) wrote, especially his superb work on the life of David and his outstanding biography of David Livingstone. But there's a special place in my heart for his book on *The Public Ministry of Christ*. Much of it consists of lectures he delivered to ministerial students in, of all things, a homiletics course! It was designed, as Blaikie writes in his introduction, "not so much to impart knowledge, as to communicate to the students a tone and practical impulse" for the ministry. Chapter titles include "Preparation for the Ministry," "His Work as a Teacher," "Elements of Impression in His Teaching," "The College of the Twelve," "Dealings with Different Classes," etc. Unfortunately, I believe most, if not all, of Blaikie's works are out of print. So when you find one in a used book store, it's worth paying extra to obtain.

One more title that I ought to mention is *A Short Life of Christ* by Everett F. Harrison. More academic than the other three books I've recommended in this section, it provides historical, theological, and especially apologetic material for the head that nicely complements what the others offer to the heart.

We preachers sometimes think that our people are less interested when we preach on the life of Christ than when we deal with some practical subject of Christian living. But we ought to ask ourselves whether our preaching Christ's birth, or his miracles, or His resurrection had anything fresh in it. Was there any new insight? Any carefully studied exposition? Any strikingly original thought? Was there any attention to overlooked details? Was there any worship? And was anything said *beautifully*?

Mercifully, there's help for the stymied preacher. Every title I've mentioned is a winner. Some of them are world class. For the amount of money we'd spend on a pizza, a round of golf, or a ticket to a ball game, one or more of them can be ours. Our people will profit from the purchase, but the great benefit will be what happens in our own souls when we let a master in Israel introduce us to the Savior we've never known like this before. ☞



Dr. Mark Minnick is the pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, where he has served on the pastoral staff since 1980. He speaks frequently in churches and at conferences across the nation and ministers regularly on mission fields around the world.

# Bring . . . the Books

*By My Spirit*

God's strength is often manifested and magnified through human weakness. Pacing the floor with one hand massaging his jaw because of severe pain from a tooth infection, Jonathan Goforth dictated a sacred classic to his son, who typed furiously trying to catch every detail (Foreword, vii). *By My Spirit* is a work of wonder for us today.

Goforth was an early 20th-century revivalist ministering in China. His saga began in 1901 after 13 years of ministry that produced little fruit. The emptiness of his early ministry drove him to his knees. His passion and constant prayer was that God would send revival. For seven years Goforth studied, prayed, read, and meditated upon God and His revival work. Only after that important time of sowing did God begin to send a harvest.

Before Goforth began his work, the Spirit of the Lord prompted him about a disagreement with a fellow worker. Goforth struggled with the necessity of making things right, but when he finally yielded, the springs of revival poured forth heavenly blessing. "All hindrance in the church is due to sin," he wrote (p. 13). One wonders if his work ever would have borne revival fruit had he neglected that first step of reconciliation.

Goforth had visited Korea on invitation from one of his mission leaders and personally witnessed the revival that was sweeping the country. Goforth recognized the fruit of revival there (p. 24):

- Many souls were saved.
- There was a zeal for evangelism.
- God's people gave generously to the Lord's work.
- The people enjoyed a renewed devotion to God's word.
- Everywhere the people prayed fervently.

In fact, the Korean revival began from a prayer meeting. A significant group of believers gathered together daily to pray for God to send revival. Since nothing had happened after the first month, many were tempted to quit. Others saw the need to redouble their efforts and pray even more. After several more months of daily fervent prayer, God sent revival. Korea's revival of 1907 kindled a fire in Goforth's heart that God could do it anywhere. "Since God was no respecter of persons, He was surely just as willing to bless China as Korea. I resolved this would be the burden of my message wherever I went" (p. 24).

*By My Spirit* chronicles Goforth's ten years of itinerant revival ministry in China. Not all of Goforth's campaigns resulted in showers of blessings, but he does record many phenomenal results. His first campaign was enormously successful. Later he learned that throughout the campaign 3,000 Korean believers were praying almost around the clock (p. 31). "The history

of revival," he noted, "shows plainly that all movements of the Spirit have started in prayer" (p. 131).

The heathen who heard about the revival noticed a dramatic change among God's people. When they saw the transformed life of a former fellow heathen, they exclaimed, "The Christian's God is come!"—as if fearful of the power of the Christian's God to change their life also (p. 31).

Goforth placed a great emphasis on confession of sin. He maintained that sin in private should be confessed in private but public sin, especially when perpetrated by the leadership of the church, should be confessed publicly. Disagreements and disputes among fellow Christians and co-laborers on the foreign field had clogged the blessings of God in China. Yet, Goforth expressed his confidence that "revival would break out in most churches" if the reconciliation principles of Matthew 5:23–24 were obeyed (p. 16):

Our reading of the Word of God makes it inconceivable to us that the Holy Spirit should be willing, even for a day, to delay His work. We may be sure that, where there is a lack of the fulness of God, it is ever due to man's lack of faith and obedience. If God the Holy Spirit is not glorifying Jesus Christ in the world today, as at Pentecost, it is we who are to blame. After all, what is revival but simply the Spirit of God fully controlling in the surrendered life? It must always be possible, then, when man yields. The sin of unyieldedness, alone, can keep us from revival. What is the secret of revival? There is no secret. Revival always comes in answer to prayer. There never has been a revival except where there have been Christian men and women thoroughly believing in and whole-heartedly pleading the promises of God. If revival is being withheld from us it is because some idol remains still enthroned; because we still insist on placing our reliance in human schemes; because we still refuse to face the unchangeable truth that "it is not by might, but by my Spirit."

Believers everywhere recognize the church's great need for revival. Brethren, my thirst has been rekindled to see God bring revival to our spiritually barren country. As Goforth states, our choice is either revival or apostasy. Do you really want revival? Are you praying for revival? Are you willing to obey? Secure your copy of *By My Spirit*, read it studiously, and as J. Hudson Taylor wrote to Jonathan Goforth, "Go forth on your knees!" 

Dr. Mark Simmons is the pastor of Marquette Manor Baptist Church in Downers Grove, Illinois. He has ministered as a church planter and senior pastor since earning his Ph.D. from Bob Jones University in 1981.



*" . . . when  
thou comest,  
bring with thee  
. . . the books"  
(2 Tim. 4:13)*

### Was Jesus Really Human?

Fundamentalists have always held clearly to the genuine and total deity of Jesus Christ. This was one of the “fundamentals” of the faith, and there was no compromise or deviation on the point. In some respects it was the flagship of Fundamentalism’s armada against modernism. But, conversely, the genuine and complete humanity of our Lord has not always been clearly understood.

We believe that Jesus is fully man and fully God, that He is neither more nor less human than we are, and that we are neither more nor less human than He is. When last did we hear of a fight for the faith over the humanity of Jesus or even a sermon on His human nature? The truth is, some of the most vexing heresies in church history have involved a denial, in some way, of the authentic human nature of Jesus of Nazareth. We probably have not seen the last of those controversies.

The Bible teaches plainly concerning “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). He was “the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1), a “babe wrapped in swaddling clothes” (Luke 2:12), a “carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James” and others, whose “sisters [are] here with us” (Mark 6:3). He had a human body, soul, and spirit (John 2:21; 12:27; 11:33). He had a human birth (Luke 2:5, 12), growth and development (Luke 2:40, 52), emotions (John 11:35), and appetites (John 19:28). He had human limitations as seen in His weariness from traveling (John 4:6), fatigue that required sleep (Matt. 8:24), and physical stress in the Garden on the night in which He was betrayed (Luke 22:43).

Our Lord had all the appearances of a human being: He was a recognizable Jew (John 4:9), had the looks of a prophet (Matt. 16:13–14), and even after his resurrection was mistaken for a gardener (John 20:15). He experienced human suffering and death (Luke 22:44; John 19:30, 34). Jesus had every essential characteristic or attribute of true humanity. (Sin is not a necessary ingredient of genuine humanity. Adam was clearly and fully human before he

sinned.)

The Bible also teaches that Jesus’s human nature, which He received from His human mother, Mary, was inseparably and permanently united to His divine nature (the eternal Logos, John 1:12) in the miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). This union formed the one indivisible Person of Jesus of Nazareth. A nature is a complex of attributes or characteristics that make something what it is. This one Person, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, has two distinct but inseparable natures. The historic formula cautions us, “we must neither divide the Person nor confound the natures.” Since His supernatural conception, Christ is, and always will be, the God-man (John 1:14; Heb. 7:24): fully God and fully man (Col. 2:9). In this union of the two natures, His human nature does not “humanize” His divine attributes in any way, nor does the divine nature “deify” any aspect whatever of His humanity.

Why is His true humanity important? One reason is that our Sinbearer had to be a member of the human race so He could pay the penalty of human sin (Rom. 6:23; Heb. 2:17, 9:22). God cannot die. No human death, no atonement for human beings. But it is also necessary for our Sinbearer to be God so that His death can have infinite value. Anything that diminishes either of our Lord’s natures undercuts His atonement for sin, thus questioning His ability to forgive sin and be our Savior. And this strikes at the very heart and soul of New Testament Christianity. “Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh* is not of God” (1 John 4:2–3; cf. 2 John 7).

Another reason His full humanity is essential is His ability to be a perfect high priest. “Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb. 2:17). He was tempted, abused, persecuted, ridiculed, and betrayed. He knows human life by experience from the inside; He has lived where we live. Our God and Savior is no mere armchair expert living in lofty splendor unrelated to us and removed far from us. He does not react to our cries mechanically and coldly, but personally, warmly, and lovingly.

Yes, Jesus Christ is really human, and His humanity is as important as His deity. ☞

“Rightly dividing the Word of Truth”  
(2 Tim. 2:15)

The true Christian, who delights in communion with the Holy Spirit, and meditates upon His law, daily acquires a stronger vision and gains a clearer and more distinct appreciation of heavenly realities. They begin to assume for him a distinctness almost equal to that of the objects of natural sense around him; and eventually he is impressed with the unsubstantial, fleeting character of terrestrial things, and the greater permanency and reality of the heavenly world (G. M. Giger, "Religious Retirement" in *The Princeton Pulpit*, 1852; quoted by Iain Murray in *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, Banner of Truth, 1987, p. 136).

Communion with God is essential in developing and maintaining lives that are pleasing to God. God has promised, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Ps. 32:8). Divine instruction and guidance become clearer to us as we draw closer in spiritual proximity to the source of it. Oh, how the children of God ought to yearn to be in close fellowship with God to get to know Him in a greater way! "I am convinced that the dearth of great saints in these times even among those who truly believe in Christ is due at least in part to our unwillingness to give sufficient time to the cultivation of the knowledge of God" (A.W. Tozer, *That Incredible Christian*, p. 136).

As I consider the idea of having close fellowship with God, I am reminded of my own salvation experience. After I became a Christian, I found myself in seemingly unique circumstances. I was saved while serving in the U.S. Navy and stationed on the island of LaMaddelena, Sardinia. There were five or six other families who were saved at the same time, but there was no local church and no pastor; there weren't even any other "older" Christians. The only denomination on the island was Catholic, and since that's what we were saved out of, we knew not to pattern ourselves after them. Wonderfully, we had only the Word of God to instruct us and the Spirit of God to guide us. We were naïve enough to believe that that was all we needed.

Although we didn't know it, we had established our own little church, and we knew that if we were going to "do it right," then we were going to have to get to know the God Who saved us. We all took great pleasure in "discovering" things in the Word and even greater pleasure in applying them to our lives. We took the Word of God at face value and there was no hesitation or argument, only "blind" obedience. We did this because we had a great admiration and appreciation for what God had done for us.

For instance, after reading the book of Acts, we began to meet on the first day of the week for worship

and every other day of the week for prayer, fellowship, and Bible-study. We even baptized each other out of obedience to God's Word. We enjoyed a closeness with God that was unsurpassed as God taught and guided us. I can honestly say that the majority of my doctrinal views and personal convictions were formed when it was just God and me.

Now there were certain characteristics of those circumstances that, I believe, promoted sweet communion with God and are essential for any Christian to enjoy close fellowship with Him. Christians need to give heed to those things in their lives, so that they, too, would experience the blessedness of unhindered, divine instruction and guidance which comes from knowing and communing with Him.

The most predominant characteristic that I remember is an insatiable desire for God. This attitude is certainly illustrated in the words of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

Seek Him! Seek Him! What can we do without Him? Seek Him! Seek Him always. But go beyond seeking Him; expect Him. . . . Seek His power, expect this power, yearn for this power; and when this power comes, yield to Him. Do not resist. . . . Let Him loose you, let Him manifest His power in you and through you (D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching And Preachers*, p.325).

For Christians to benefit fully from their relationship to God, we must earnestly and diligently seek Him. God exhorts us to put forth the effort to seek Him. "But if . . . thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Dt. 4:29). Seeking God is often compared to treasure-hunting. People have endured great sacrifice and affliction in seeking worldly treasures. Many have forsaken jobs, friends, and families for the chance to find buried treasure. How much more ought the people of God to give great diligence in seeking Him.

We must continue seeking, and take pains in seeking, as those that search; and this we must do with our heart (that is, in sincerity and uprightness), and with our whole heart (that is, with vigor and fervency, putting forth all that is within us in prayer), and those who thus seek God shall find Him, and shall find Him their bountiful rewarder (Matthew Henry's Commentary, Vol. 4, p.588).

Prayer and Bible-study are the means by which we seek after God. Priority must be given to them if we're

*"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"*

*Charles Spurgeon*

to succeed, but oftentimes, these two basic Christian activities are neglected because of the demands upon our time. And because of that neglect, we doubt the instruction and guidance of God to the point of even doubting our salvation. We need to remember,

if you are to be anything, there is one thing you must secure. You must have time to enter into your own heart and be quiet, you must learn to collect yourselves, to be alone with yourselves, alone with your own thoughts, alone with eternal realities which are behind the rush and confusion of moral things, alone with God. You must learn to shut your door on all your energy, on all your interest, on your hopes and fears and cares, and in the silence of your chamber to “posses your souls” (Dean Church, quoted in James Stalker, *The Preacher and His Models*, p.54).

To this, A.W. Tozer adds,

Our religious activities should be ordered in such a way as to leave plenty of time for the cultivation of the fruits of solitude and silence. It should be remembered, however, that it is possible to waste such quiet periods as we may be able to snatch ourselves out of the clamorous day. Our meditation must be directed toward God; otherwise we may spend our time of retiral in quiet converse with ourselves. This may quiet our nerves but will not further our spiritual life in any way (A.W. Tozer, *That Incredible Christian*, p.137).

To seek God diligently in prayer and in His word ought to be the highest goal of every Christian. For then we can enjoy that sweet closeness with Him that our heart and soul yearn for. Another characteristic of our “island-church” was an immovable devotion and commitment to God. God’s Word was our command. The Lord Jesus Christ set our priority in Matthew 22:37–38 when He said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.” The apostle Paul wrote in Titus 3:8, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”

A great lack of devotion to God and commitment to His work is evident among Christians today. Many are like the chicken in the story of a chicken and a pig. A chicken and a pig were passing a diner whose claim to fame was their egg and ham platter. Upon seeing the diner, the chicken welled-up with pride and said, “If it wasn’t for my efforts, that diner wouldn’t be as successful as it is.” The chicken went on bragging until she realized that the pig had grown silent. So she asked the pig why he was so somber. The pig replied, “Your part in the diner’s success is merely the giving of a contribution, but for my family and me, it is the giving of our

lives.” To be truly devoted and truly committed to God requires the giving of one’s life to God, not merely the occasional “giving of a contribution.”

Devotion signifies a life given or devoted to God. He therefore is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God who considers God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life, parts of piety, by doing everything in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to His Glory (William Law, *A Serious Call To a Devout and Holy Life*, p.1).

A true devotion and commitment to God draws the believer into a closer relationship to Him. Then our service for Him isn’t burdensome or wearisome but delightful and fulfilling.

A final characteristic that was prevalent and I think important for maintaining a closeness with the Lord was unity among the brethren. There were no political, denominational, or personal distractions that would rob us of our searching for God and our devotion to Him. We had no preconceived ideas of what Christianity was suppose to be, so we were greatly blessed to be taught by the Master-Teacher. The Corinthian church was distracted because of their division. Paul had to beseech them, “that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor.1:10). We were “joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” based solely upon the Word of God. We were united in Christ! In this environment, God was able to commune with us and teach us His word without any outside rumbings. And because of that, we knew what we believed before we ever got back to the U.S. to look for a church.

I don’t believe the way I do because I’m a Baptist. I’m an independent, fundamental Baptist because they believe the same things that God had taught me when I was alone with Him. But I’ve found that no one is totally immune from the effects of even the slightest “splintering” of the brethren. We must be careful, even in the ranks of Fundamentalism, not to allow some of our “distinctives” to create distractions for us.

We can’t all go off to some island to get alone with God. We need to be able to do it right where God has put us. It may require revamping our whole priority structure, but we need to do it if we want to enjoy that divine instruction and guidance. Seeking God must be a priority. Wrestle with God until you receive the blessing. Devotion and commitment to God must be a priority: “Give of your best to the Master / Give Him first place in your heart” (Howard B. Grose). Unity must be a priority as we seek to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). May God help us to set right priorities that we might delight in sweet communion with Him. 

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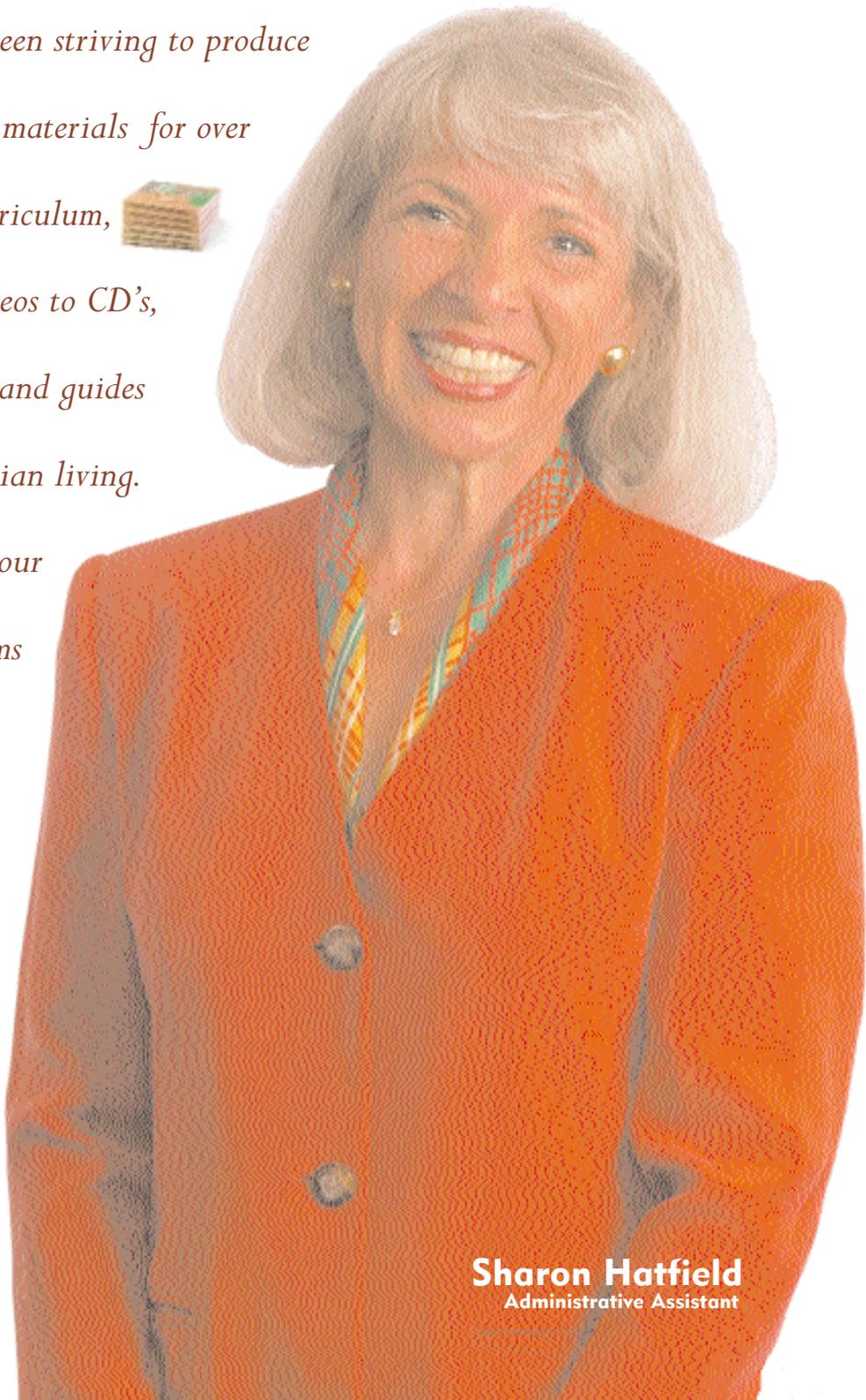
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## A Cup of Water

We often hear a great deal of emphasis on people who have accomplished great things for God. Sermons focus on major Bible characters such as Moses, David, Esther, or Paul. Preachers frequently challenge us with the lives of famous Christians such as Hudson Taylor, John and Betty Stam, and David Livingstone. We sing songs by well-known hymnwriters Fanny Crosby, Philip Bliss, Frances Havergal, and others. Spurgeon, Moody, Sunday, and the Wesleys are quoted regularly.

No doubt these distinguished believers will have great rewards in heaven for their faithful service to God. But have you ever stopped to consider the others who have been equally faithful and who will be equally rewarded, whom we may never hear about? The unknown people who witnessed to or prayed for those famous individuals named above?

The Bible is full of people who did great things that we rarely hear about. Asa, king of Judah, did right in the sight of God. When Judah was far outnumbered in battle by Zerah and the Ethiopians, Asa cried out to the Lord for help (2 Chron. 14:9–12). God routed the army of the enemy and granted Judah victory because of Asa's faithfulness and reliance on the Lord.

Second Kings 22:5–7 records the nameless laborers who "dealt faithfully" in caring for the house of God under Josiah's reign. Similarly, we have those who faithfully maintain and care for our church buildings today. They quietly make sure the facilities stay clean and in good repair. Sometimes their work goes unnoticed until sickness causes them to miss their commitment. They may be unnoticed by men, but they are not forgotten before God.

Remember Ebedmelech? He was the man who obtained permission to rescue Jeremiah from the pit (Jer. 38:7–13). God remembers the countless faithful priests, the unnamed prophets, David's 30 fighting men, and the humble doorkeepers of the house of God. Hebrews 11 describes some of the activities of these Old Testament saints, including those who are unnamed and virtually unknown to us, but not to God.

The New Testament too has its share of unsung heroes. Tychicus was responsible for delivering Paul's letters to the churches. Because of his steadfast love for God and faithful service, we have records of the early church. Paul mentions many people at the end of some of his epistles about whom we know almost nothing, yet they were special enough for him to remember them. Many had probably done things that

only Paul and God knew.

What about you? Are you a well-known person ministering in the limelight, or are you an "unknown" saint, an unnoticed believer, perhaps even a shut-in unable to leave your home? There are areas in which you can be faithful.

You can pray. Prayer moves the Hand that moves the world and is the key that unlocks God's blessings on others. Do you pay bills? You can place a tract in each envelope. Are you a good talker? Call people on the phone and wish them a good day, invite them to church, or witness to them. You may be able to baby-sit for couples who need a night out together. Perhaps you could invite neighbors to a Bible study in your home. With a computer you can e-mail missionaries; even one e-mail a week will touch at least 52 lives in a year! And you may never know when you are influencing a Spurgeon or Wesley, a Taylor or Livingstone.

Suppose you place a tract in a bill, or on a restaurant table. Through that tract, someone (you may never know who) accepts the Lord and surrenders his life to serve God. That one may even become a missionary, go to a foreign field, win others to the Lord and train many local men to be preachers. Each one of these wins others to Christ, and on it goes. All because of one tract faithfully given by a person who does not think he can do much for God.

We do not know the results of what we do for God. But we do know that even the smallest service faithfully rendered for God's glory will be rewarded. Jesus promised, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward" (Mark 9:41), for "thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6b).

Sometimes age, health, or other factors seem to limit what we think we can do for God. But no matter how small or insignificant our work seems, God has a special regard for each thing we do for Him. Not even a cup of water given in His name will be overlooked.

Flowers that bloom in the wilderness are seen by no one but God. Dear Christian, no matter where you are, be faithful to God and let Him use your talents and opportunities in whatever way He chooses. Your labors may seem to you small, insignificant, unnoticed. You may never know the results until eternity. But God knows, takes note, and remembers your faithfulness.

Belinda Jo Adams is a freelance writer living in North Pole, Alaska.

# An Unforgettable Preacher: Georgi Vins

Rick Barry

On April 27, 1979, Baptist preacher Georgi Vins and four Soviet dissident prisoners were seated on a jet, surrounded by 20 KGB agents and bound for New York City. Just two hours before Georgi had been informed that he was being stripped of his Soviet citizenship and would be exiled to the United States, never to return. *Lord, why are you taking me to this foreign country? he prayed silently. I don't know anyone in America. I don't speak English. What will it be like? When will I see my family again?*

In America, U.S. representatives told Georgi that he could relax and retire: he had suffered enough for his Christian convictions, and now the American taxpayers would let him finish his life in ease. However, even though Georgi didn't know why of all the Christian prisoners in Soviet labor camps he had been singled out for deportment to America, he was sure God hadn't flown him across the ocean just to relax for the rest of his life. After much prayer, he determined that, even though he was in the West, his friends and fellow Christians back in the USSR needed the prayers of believers worldwide in order to survive the persecution they were undergoing. So Georgi Vins immediately began speaking out, telling the people of the West about the oppression of believers in the USSR. After Georgi's first press conference, President Carter invited him to Washington, D.C., for a personal visit. In Washington, the Carters invited him to a church service. *What a contrast, Georgi thought, to see the President of the United States holding a Bible and teaching a Sunday school lesson, while leaders in my country are confiscating and burning Bibles and putting Christians in prison for teaching from that Book!*<sup>1</sup>

Georgi still didn't know any English, but with the help of interpreters, he began accepting invitations to speak in churches and share his burden for the persecuted church. Everywhere he went, he passionately preached and recounted some of his own experiences behind the barbed wire, emphasizing that both men and women were still suffering for their faith in the world's largest nation.

Six weeks after Georgi's arrival, his family was allowed to follow him into exile. Life in America was confusing for these exiles from the communist world. They initially expected all Baptists in America to be conservative and fundamental, but that turned out to be false. Georgi himself was immediately inundated with requests—for him to sign away the film rights to his life's story, to write a book of his experiences, to publicly throw his support to various organizations. Wanting to escape all the commercialism and high pressure, he accept-

ed an invitation to visit northern Indiana. There, he decided, he could escape the stress and start a fresh life in this new country. Thus, within a year of his arrival in America, in Elkhart, Indiana, he founded International Representation (changed to Russian Gospel Ministries in 1988) in order to represent, defend, and aid the persecuted church of the Soviet Union.

Americans who saw pictures of Georgi Vins in those years sometimes commented that they never saw photos of him smiling. Didn't he have a sense of humor? Yes, Georgi Vins smiled and even joked, but if he didn't do it as much as his neighbors in this new land it was understandable: not only had he personally spent eight years in prisons and labor camps for preaching the gospel, but he knew that many other Christians in his homeland were still gripped in that same plight. This was urgent business that needed prayer, not laughter! So in every sermon, he urged western believers to pray for their

brethren in bonds and to cherish the religious freedom so taken for granted in the West.

Serious though he was, Georgi frequently enjoyed sharing one amusing story from his trial in Kiev. When the police had arrested him, they found a hand-copied manuscript of Psalm 23 on him, along with notes for teaching the psalm to children. Holding up this sheet of paper at the trial, the judge asked him, "Is this your handwriting? Did you write this?"

"It's my handwriting," Georgi explained, "but I only copied it. King David wrote that about 3,000 years ago."

"I don't know any King David," the judge shot back, "but I know you. You wrote this!" So the court records included a charge that Georgi Vins had authored this part of the Bible.

"When I see David in heaven," Georgi would say with a twinkle in his eye, "I think I'll tell him that I should get at least a little credit for writing that psalm—after all, I suffered for it!"

Undoubtedly Georgi Vins was a man with a mission, and even the need to preach through an interpreter couldn't slow him in conveying his message. But what was Georgi Vins like out of the pulpit, in places where no one knew that this gray-immigrant had been invited to the White House by Presidents Carter and Reagan? Several words come to mind:

*Poet:* Georgi Vins, like most Russians, was taught to appreciate poetry at an early age. However, instead of merely reading poems, he also began writing them at an early age, even during his prison years. In fact, a number of his poems have been set to music, becoming hymns that are often heard in Russian church services.



*Gardener:* For this world-famous preacher, gardening wasn't an unpleasant chore, it was a relaxing hobby. He loved to plant seeds and watch how God provided fruit from them. He especially loved his raspberry bushes and devoted much of his backyard to them.

*Historian:* Georgi loved history and learning new facts about the past. He would grow excited as he recounted an article he'd read on a tomb recently discovered in Israel, or about one of Russia's past czars.

*Author:* In addition to several collections of his Christian poetry in Russian, Georgi penned a number of other books: *Konshaubi* and *The Gospel in Bonds* (which deal with his own prison experiences), *Along the Path of Faithfulness* (about the Russian believers in the 20th century), and *On the Road*, a compilation of true short stories.

*Prayer warrior:* As a co-laborer and interpreter who often shared motel rooms with Georgi Vins, I can testify that on every trip, regardless of how exhausted he was, Georgi Vins would kneel at the bedside in his pajamas and pray—for Christian prisoners, for freedom for the gospel in Russia, for his staff members, but also for western Christianity and his new home, America. Brother Vins sometimes commented on how it grieved him to see American believers living for materialism and entertainment. "In Russia," he noted, "life was black and white: either you professed faith in Jesus and lived like it, or you didn't believe and lived like an atheist. But here, it seems that so many people live in a gray area—professing Christ with their lips but showing no evidence of it in their lifestyle."

Probably the most emotional moment that I ever saw in this preacher's life came in the summer of 1990. Just weeks after having quadruple heart bypass surgery, Georgi was in the office, reading *Russkaya Mysl*, a Russian-language newspaper that is printed in France. Unexpectedly, he burst from his office with the newspaper in hand, saying, "Call everyone to the conference room!" Then, with tears in his eyes, the preacher-in-exile read aloud an article about a decree that then-Soviet president Gorbachev had just signed, reinstating the citizenship of over 20 exiled Russians. Included in the list was the name, "Vins, Georgi Petrovich."

"I can go back now!" he emphasized. "I thought I would die without ever seeing Russia again, but now I can go back!"

And go back he did! As soon as his heart surgeon would permit it, Georgi and his wife Nadia were flying back to their native land. Arriving in Kiev, the Vinses enjoyed reunion after reunion as they visited family members, friends, and churches, where he was able at last to preach in Russian—with no interpreters to interrupt!

Certainly many changes had come to Russia, and in the following months and years Georgi returned to his homeland 14 or 15 times, always to preach and encourage evangelism in whatever ways he could. After each trip, he seemed to have new ideas and refreshed enthusiasm for helping the formerly persecuted churches share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Human bodies, however, eventually wear out. In the autumn of 1997 Georgi Vins was driving his car, felt himself passing out, and barely got his vehicle off the road before losing consciousness. Hospital tests discovered an inoperable

tumor growing deep in his brain. Sobering though this news was, Georgi took some comfort in the thought that, rather than taking him quickly, the Lord had let him know that it was almost time to come Home and that he should begin wrapping up his final projects. So Georgi Vins convened his last meeting of Russian Gospel Ministries' board of directors, disclosing this news and giving them some last guidance and encouragement for the future of the mission. As his strength ebbed, he even continued dictating and editing a book, literally from his deathbed.

In his final days on earth, Georgi was too weak even to eat. But friends and family heard him passing the hours by faintly praying to the Lord whom he had served most of his life. Then, on Sunday morning of January 11, 1998, Georgi Vins took a last breath and went to meet His Savior face to face.

He was a humble preacher who never considered himself great, yet was greatly used by the God he loved so deeply. Those who knew him will never forget him.

Rick Barry has served at Russian Gospel Ministries since 1987, first as Assistant to Georgi Vins and currently as Administrative Vice-President. For more information on Georgi Vins or the work of Russian Gospel Ministries, the mission can be contacted at P.O. Box 1188, Elkhart, IN 46515 or [RGMI@juno.com](mailto:RGMI@juno.com)

<sup>1</sup>Vins, Georgi. *The Gospel in Bonds*. Russian Gospel Ministries, 1995. p. 92.

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The point of having an open mind, like having an open mouth, is to close it on something solid.  
—G. K. Chesterton

Alas, how great and irreconcilable is the enmity of the serpent.  
—George Whitefield

A single thought is enough to occupy us; we cannot think of two things at once.  
—Blaise Pascal

We talk about heaven being so far away. It is within speaking distance to those who belong there.  
—Dwight L. Moody

People are living longer now; they have to—who can afford to die?  
—Unknown

Psychoanalysis is confession without absolution.  
—G. K. Chesterton

Almost every man wastes parts of his life in attempts to display qualities which he does not possess, and to gain applause which he cannot keep.  
—Samuel Johnson

One of the striking differences between a cat and a lie is that a cat has only nine lives.  
—Mark Twain

He who would please all men will never find rest.  
—Unknown

If unholy hands rock the cradle, what else can you expect but an unholy world? Godless mothers mean a godless world.  
—Bob Jones Sr.

A proverb is no proverb to you until life has illustrated it.  
—John Keats

An excuse is worse and more terrible than a lie; for an excuse is a lie guarded.  
—Alexander Pope

He sits not sure that sits too high.  
—Unknown

Half the truth is often a great lie.  
—Unknown

The Christians' God is a God who makes the soul aware that He is its sole good.  
—Blaise Pascal

Darkness is my point of view, my right to myself; light is God's point of view.  
—Oswald Chambers

The new moralists think that love must be defined by

human beings and tailored to meet each situation; Biblical writers hold that love is served by keeping the commandments of God.  
—Erwin W. Lutzer

Words can sting like anything, but silence breaks the heart.  
—Phyllis McGinley

He who governed the world before I was born shall take care of it likewise when I am dead. My part is to improve the present moment.  
—John Wesley

Tolerance is another word for indifference.  
—Anonymous

God wants worshippers before workers; indeed the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the lost art of worship.  
—A. W. Tozer

You have but two topics, yourself and me. I am sick of both.  
—Samuel Johnson

Rule your mind or it will rule you.  
—Horace

To err is human, to repent divine, to persist devilish.  
—Benjamin Franklin



*"Honest Nelson. It reads 'visit us at [www.pharaoh.com](http://www.pharaoh.com)'"*

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

**“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise:  
but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”  
(Prov. 13:20).**

Fourteen-year-old Joe pushed his black-rimmed glasses up on his nose as he drilled his Sunday school verse. Then, slamming through the screen door, he saw his brother loping down the driveway. “Hey Mark, wait up!” he yelled at his sixteen-year-old brother’s retreating back.

“Tell Mom I have basketball practice after school, okay?” Mark yelled back, then added, stopping and grinning down at his younger brother, “Hey, Stub! Don’t you want to join the team? I hear they’re looking for a mascot.”

Joe smiled weakly, gripping his books with white knuckles. He was used to the teasing of his family members since Mark had shot up in height, taking after their father’s side of the family. He wished he had Mark’s good looks and ability to meet new people.

“I wish we were back in Illinois. The school was smaller, and I knew everybody, and—well—I just don’t fit in here.” Joe’s voice trailed off.

“I think the kids here are great,” said Mark.

Joe winced at the confidence in Mark’s voice. *That’s easy for you to say*, he thought. He watched enviously as Mark climbed into a car full of students and sped off to school, leaving Joe to trudge alone to the bus stop.

*Mark seems to attract friends like magnets*, Joe thought, kicking at an imaginary rock. He didn’t notice the car rattling up to the curb in front of him.

“Hey Joey—want a ride?” Joe bent over and glanced at the pile of boys in the big car. It was Rick, the driver, speaking to him. Rick, a senior, was one of the most popular boys in his school. Not only was he captain of the basketball team, but he always seemed to command an audience of admirers who competed for his favor. Never before had he spoken to Joe, or even acknowledged his existence. Joe recognized the others in the car as part of Rick’s followers, although he didn’t know their names.

“What’s the matter, won’t your mommy let you?” Rick asked with a smile. The other boys howled with laughter. Joe felt the tiniest shiver at the base of his neck. He had heard some ugly rumors about some of Rick’s activities, but he didn’t know them to be true. After all, he was in a

Christian school.

“You’d really give me a ride?” Joe asked hesitantly. He wanted to believe the boy was sincere, but something inside warned him otherwise.

“Hey—I asked you, didn’t I?” Rick revved the engine and drummed his fingers on the car door. “Besides, what are friends for?” he said innocently.

Friends. Here was an opportunity to be accepted as one of them. “Well—okay,” Joe said, wondering why he didn’t feel more excited.

The door sprang open. Joe crawled into a tangle of arms and legs in the back seat and jammed his body in between elbows and shoulders. He looked around for a seat belt, but none was available.

The car took off with a jerk. As it paused at the corner, Joe’s bus lumbered past. He grinned shakily and gave the thumbs-up sign to the faces peering through the steamy windows.

“So, Joey boy, what do you think?” Rick asked as the car sped down a back road.

“Huh?—Oh, great.” Joe said with a forced smile. He could see Rick staring at him in the rearview mirror.

He glanced out the window. *Oh, no—not North Platte Highway*, Joe thought, feeling his stomach tighten as the car turned

onto the hilly road—the long way to school. He felt as though he were strapped into a roller-coaster seat.

The scenery was a blur as the car crested a hill. *I didn’t think this old Buick could go this fast*, Joe thought.

Suddenly he was aware of a pungent smell as a copper-colored bottle was passed to the back seat. Was his heart thudding, or had someone just turned up the music?

“How about it, Joey—want a swig?” Rick asked. His eyes in the rear-view mirror seemed to dare Joe to object.

“No, I—uh—don’t drink,” said Joe lamely. His hands were icy.

“What’s that?” Rick asked sharply.

“I said,” Joe took a deep breath, “I don’t drink.”

“Hey,” someone interrupted, “let’s see how close we can get to this car!”

Joe jerked his head up. They were so close to a car in front of them that Joe could see the startled eyes of an elderly man looking back at them from his mirror. Another hill loomed ahead. Surely Rick wouldn’t—but Joe’s head whipped back as Rick floored the Buick and pulled into the

# In the Company of Fools



**Marilyn Janke**

left lane. Another boy voiced Joe's thoughts.

"Rick, don't—"

"Shut up! I'm driving!" Rick yelled.

*A companion of fools suffers harm.* As they passed the old man's car, the verse flashed through Joe's mind. He felt suffocated. If another vehicle was coming over the hill. . . . Joe closed his eyes.

When he opened them, their car was hurtling down the other side. Sure enough, ahead of them was a pickup truck speeding in their direction. A split second before they met in a head-on collision, Rick whipped over in front of the old man's car. The driver of the truck leaned angrily on his horn. The Buick swerved crazily as Rick struggled to regain control, then shot onto the graveled shoulder, barely missing a telephone pole. Rick stomped on the brake, coming to a halt inches from a chain-link fence and pitching Joe forward against the seat in front of him. The engine stalled. After a moment of stunned silence, Rick restarted the car and prepared to pull back onto the highway.

Dazed, Joe straightened up and felt his head. His eye would be black tomorrow, and he could taste the blood coming from his cut lip. "Let me out," he said shakily.

"Hey, we're all okay, aren't we? Can't take the excitement, huh, Joey boy?" Rick sneered.

"I said, let me out!" Joe thundered, reaching for the door. He opened it and got out.

Rick shrugged. "All right, Joey boy, have it your way. I thought maybe you'd like to be one of us, but I guess you're not old enough. Enjoy your walk to school." Amidst laughter, the car took off, leaving Joe choking in a swirl of dust and gravel.

A half-hour later, a sweaty, disheveled Joe trudged through the school door and headed for the office. Instead of waiting for kids to come to him, he made up his mind that he was going to seek out some friends—the right kind of friends. It was time he started to "walk with the wise."

Marilyn Janke and her husband, David, serve as missionaries in Canada.

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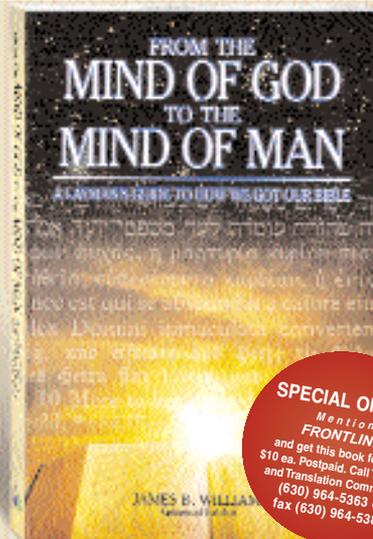
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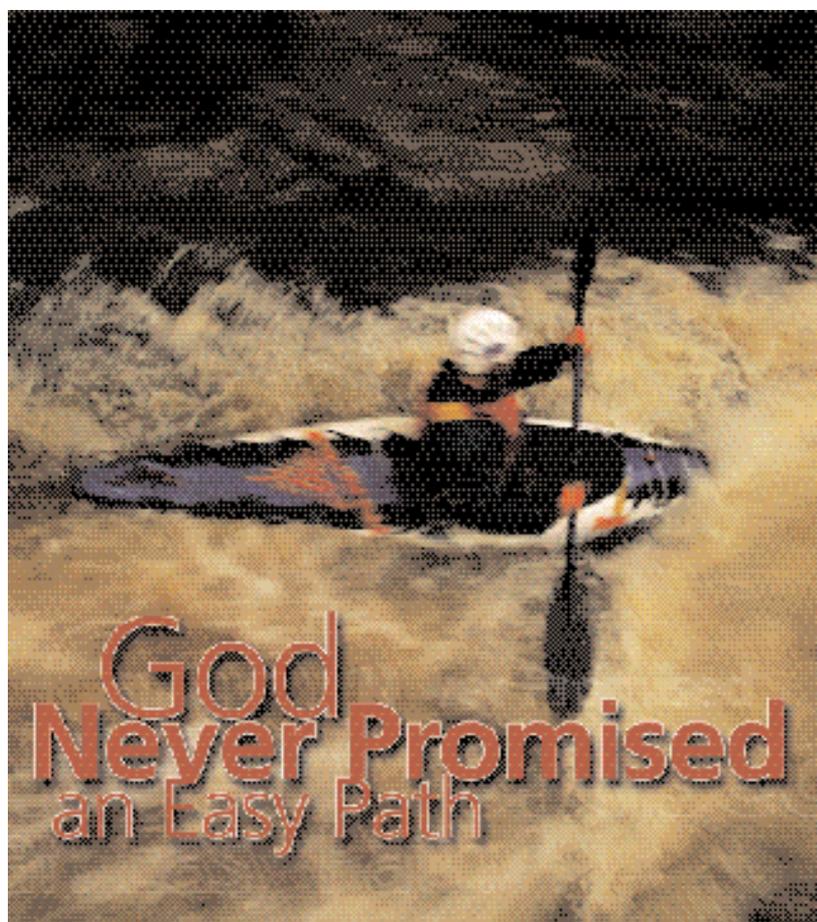


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## Barkless Dogs

Phil Shuler

**W**hy is our society so morally and spiritually out of control today? Why have we swung from an honorable society to a society of crime, sex, and humanism? Why has America accepted the loss of prayer at our social functions? Shall we blame politicians? Does the finger point solely at public school administration? How about Hollywood?

If we are going to be honest, we must admit as fact that the culprit is none other than the pastors who have lost their bark in the pulpit! When I was growing up in El Monte, California, about 90 percent of the churches had revivals twice a year. These were not just Baptist churches. In Los Angeles, where my father pastored Trinity Methodist Church, revivals were held in Congregational, Nazarene, Assembly of God, Presbyterian, and almost every other church in town. I even remember seeing a revival sign outside of an Episcopal church in 1950. A great majority of pulpits in that day thundered against sin and lifted Jesus Christ high as sin's only remedy. And the result of the great revivals under the Wesley crowd showed in their day a much more godly, moral, Christian-influenced society than we see today. What happened?

The moral and spiritual health of our nation, without question, rises or falls on the message from our pulpits. Why don't we witness spiritual and moral soundness today? To this preacher, the answer is evident. The educational departments in many once-sound schools are placing a question mark over many of the cardinal truths found in our Bible and attempting to explain away the very message that the Holy Spirit sealed—the message of original sin, the substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross, and the guarantee of eternal life for those who have been born again. And with this one and only means of salvation comes the obligation to sever our relationship with the god of this world and all of his sinful ways. Outside of the fundamental, Bible-believing churches, where do you hear such preaching today?

A shepherd's best aid is his dog. He herds the sheep and guards them from predators. Isaiah was aware of this when he wrote: "The watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (56:10).

*The watchmen are blind.* When you have unsaved

teachers training ministerial students, you have blind sergeants training the soldiers how to fire at the bullseye. These soldiers are going to follow their trainers. Thus, upon completion of their training, these soldiers are not going to be able to hit the enemy. Their training is wrong.

How can a blind watchman warn the city of peril when he can't see it coming? Within time, he will lose the city! This has been the plight of the Methodist church of my youth as well as other great denominational churches. Education that teaches unbelief produces death to the church that "hires" the graduate to fill their pulpit.

*They are all ignorant.* Graduate students come out with their minds chock full of information, but little that corresponds to the message of the Bible. Faith has given way to education, fact has given way to doubt, and success in education is measured by the word and agenda of an unbelieving professor in some university.

*They are all dumb dogs.* They have lost their bark! I was in a home once where they had a dog that surgically had its "bark" removed. It gave no warning of approaching visitors. It opened his mouth and you could see the stomach move, but no sound came from its mouth.

A great number of our pulpits are being supplied by these dumb dogs. They open their mouths and you see movement in their body language, but, when it comes to the trends of our day that cause the church to slip from its moorings, they are silent. It will cost them if they speak. The congregation wants a nice man of high education who will not make waves! And dumb dogs fit the bill. So, they preach a harmless sermon Sunday morning. Even if some of the oldtimers in his church ask the pastor to consider having revival meetings in the church, he fears such a prospect, for this will go against his expensive training!

Our generation of Fundamentalists have a most important job to do. That job is to proclaim with full voice the message of salvation and separation from sin. If we don't, our great-grandchildren will have to read in history books about a day when some of us dogs *did* bark, and the warning was given to a generation headed for hell.

Dr. Phil Shuler is an evangelist based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

“Understandest thou what thou readest?” That is the perpetual question with which hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) is concerned. The fact is, you engage in hermeneutics every day whenever you read or hear any form of communication. And you practice Biblical hermeneutics whenever you read your Bible. You make decisions about *what* the text means, *how* it applies to you, or *whether* it even applies to you at all.

You have probably heard someone assert, “No one knows for sure what the Bible means. You can make it say whatever you want.” Oddly, few ever say that about a Shakespeare play or a car repair manual. Why not? Is the Bible an open-ended Book that can mean different things to different people at different times? Or are there “rules of interpretation” that can help us handle the Bible objectively, consistently, and meaningfully?

### Why Is It Necessary?

Aside from the fact that, consciously or unconsciously, rightly or wrongly, you engage in hermeneutics every time you open your Bible, why is an understanding of hermeneutics as important for the layman as it is for the preacher or teacher? Roy Zuck points out three reasons: (1) hermeneutics is an essential and unavoidable step beyond mere observation of the text (reading), (2) hermeneutics is essential for understanding and teaching the Bible accurately, and (3) hermeneutics is essential for applying the Bible properly.

### A Preliminary Principle

Avoid using phrases such as “What this passage says to me” or “What this verse means to me is . . .” Why? Those expressions remove—however subtly and unintentionally—the authority of a text’s meaning from the text itself and God’s intent in giving that text, and place it on me and my perception—or worse, my ingenuity. A text does not mean different things to different people at different times. What *do* you say, then, when you may not want, or may not be able, to be dogmatic about the meaning of a particular text? How about, “What this text seems to be saying is . . .” That is *subtly* but *significantly* different from the subjective qualifiers above, because it acknowledges that *the authority resides in an objective text, not in my subjective understanding of it.*

### Characteristically Literal

Virtually all human communication follows a *characteristically literal* hermeneutic. No child ponders what his father *really* means when he says, “Son, take out the trash.” A characteristically literal meaning underlies all common, everyday human communication. I say *characteristically* because we all understand that normal communication also customarily involves idioms and figures of speech, which we learn

to interpret accordingly. Even so, underneath every figurative expression is an actual, literal intent. (For example, when Christ referred to Herod as “that fox”—a kind of metaphor known technically as *hypocatastasis*—he did not literally mean that Herod had whiskers and a pointy nose; but He *did* literally mean that Herod was cunning and crafty.)

Since God gave the Bible in order to reveal Himself to man and since He gave it in the customary literary forms of human communication, our approach to understanding the Bible should follow the same characteristically literal hermeneutic that we employ in processing virtually all other communication. Two vital keys that we instinctively apply in everyday hermeneutics—but which are too frequently ignored in Biblical hermeneutics—are *genre* and *context*. The remainder of this column focuses on the latter.

### Interpreting by the “Rules”

Hermeneutics entails both science (knowing and understanding the principles of interpreting communication) and art (accurately applying those principles). Biblical hermeneutics in particular involves two levels: (1) ascertaining exactly what the text *meant* to its original audience in their historical context (*exegesis*, which means to draw *out* the meaning inherent in the text, as opposed to *eisegesis*, which refers to reading *into* the text a meaning that is not there), and (2) discerning precisely what the text *means* to us in our contemporary context (*exposition* and *application*). *The order of this process is crucial.* When we bypass or ignore what it *meant* and jump directly to what we think it *means*, we short-circuit the hermeneutical process and end up with a skewed understanding of the Bible. And skewed understanding abounds.

The point is, when we talk about “rules” for interpreting the Bible, we are *not* talking about a unique code that scholars have invented especially for handling the Bible. Indeed, we are not talking about rules that have been *invented* at all. We are talking about observing, identifying, and applying the very same “laws” that govern our normal interpretation of virtually all other communication—laws that are as intrinsic to human communication as the law of gravity is to the operation of the physical universe.

### Right Conclusion, Wrong Text

A frequent hermeneutical *faux pas* is coming to a *right* conclusion from a *wrong* text. “But as long as it’s a *right* conclusion,” someone asks, “why does it matter?” Such a cavalier approach to God’s revelation not only betrays a low regard for handling His Word accurately, but also speaks poorly to others (who see the contradiction between the principles and our “proof texts”) and discredits the Bible in their eyes. (“See,” they say, “they make it mean whatever they want.”)

# INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE INTERPRETATION

Moreover, when we misuse a text to teach what it was not meant to teach, we rob that text of the truth God actually intended it to teach. What causes contribute to this problem?

(1) *Sometimes we fail to observe the context.* When we cite 1 Corinthians 15:31 as proof that we need to die to self and sin daily, we show that we either do not know the context of Paul's statement or do not care about what Paul actually was saying. Paul is stating hyperbolically that he faced physical death every day. The whole chapter is about literal death and resurrection, not "spiritual" death to self. Right principle, wrong text.

(2) *Sometimes we misread the text.* Why did Christ instruct His disciples, "Drink ye all of it" (Mt. 26:27)? Let's suppose it means that we must partake fully of Christ's sacrifice and embrace unreservedly all His work on our behalf, if we are to be saved. That might preach well, but it does not enjoy the luxury of support from the text. Grammatically, the "all" goes with the "ye," not with the "of it." It is, "All of you drink of it," or "Drink, ye all, of it." Good principle, wrong text.

(3) *Sometimes we base an interpretation on a flawed translation.* Proverbs 18:24 is commonly thought to teach the importance of friendliness. Valid principle, wrong text. In a sense, it teaches the opposite. The Hebrew verb traditionally translated "must show himself friendly" is actually from a root and in a form that means "to be smashed up"! That is why even the old *American Standard Version* translates it, "He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction." The verse isn't downplaying the value of friendliness; it doesn't address "friendliness" at all. As the rest of the verse makes clear, the point is *loyalty*, the kind of fidelity to a friend that causes one to stick closer than even a brother. A man of many friends—a friend to all the world, whose friendships are a mile wide but only an inch deep—will come to ruin, *but* there is a kind of friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Someone may say, "That really bothers and confuses me, because the Lord spoke to my heart and convicted me about my selfishness and unfriendliness through that verse. Are you saying that I was mistaken, and that it wasn't God at all?" No. God is so great and so gracious that He is able to deal with us where we are and through what we have available to us in terms of teaching and understanding. *However*, when we come to understand—through accurate translation and contextual considerations—what a verse actually means, we need to "grow up" to that and use it to teach only what it actually teaches. Because *the text itself is intended by God always to mean only one thing to everyone at all times.*

(4) *Sometimes we practice a flawed hermeneutic.* Despite his brilliance, Augustine sometimes devised speculative spiritualizations through an allegorical approach to the text. For example, in his interpretation of the parable of the good

Samaritan, the man robbed and beaten is Adam, Jerusalem (where he is going) is heaven, the robbers are Satan and his angels, the priest is the Law, and the Levite represents the Prophets; the good Samaritan is, of course, Christ. We rarely go to this extreme, but we are probably more guilty of this kind of symbolic approach to God's Word than we suppose. An allegorical approach is dangerous because it ignores the plain literal intent of the text, and it is unreliable because it has virtually no objective controls; the only limitation is your imagination.

## Context, Context, Context

We commonly draw on Biblical language in our preaching, teaching, and conversation. But if what *we* mean doesn't match what *it* means in its context, we do a disservice to the text and to people's proper understanding of that text. Have you ever heard someone cite Genesis 31:49 ("The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent from one another") as a tender wish for God's watchcare? That's not at all what Laban had in mind. And it may make for popular preaching to say that Matthew 24:36–39 teaches that the days immediately preceding "the coming of the Son of man" will be characterized by widespread wickedness, but that is clearly *not* what Christ had in mind when he cited "the days of Noah." How do we know? Context. The normal, non-sinful, everyday activities Christ cited from the days of Noah, coupled with the repeated emphasis throughout the entire passage, indicates that the point is suddenness, unexpectedness. I even heard of a church once that used Ezekiel 16:44b ("As is the mother, so is the daughter") as the theme verse for a mother-daughter banquet. Yikes!

We tend to read the Bible too selectively, as though it were merely a collection of isolated proof texts. As helpful as they are for reference, verse divisions can cause us to forget that *a verse is not an isolated statement of Scripture, but a sentence (or phrase) within a paragraph.* The authority for our interpretation resides in the meaning of the text. And the meaning of any text is always determined by its context.

## A Final Word

Proper hermeneutics is not a matter of knowing Greek or Hebrew. It is simply a matter, first, of observing the context. *That* is what produces sound, authoritative preaching, teaching, and Bible study. The point of all this is not to generate a critical spirit when we hear something that we may be convinced is not hermeneutically sound, or to assume God is not speaking through someone who may not be handling the text as accurately as one might hope. In hearing God's Word, be charitable toward others. But in handling God's Word, be strict with yourself, honest with the text, and observant of the context.

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## Georgia SBC Disciplines Churches

Georgia's Savannah Association removed Memorial Baptist Church from the fellowship of the association because it called a woman as pastor. The majority of messengers voted 181 to 96 that the church had stepped outside the boundaries of acceptable practice. Carolyn Hale was called as pastor of Memorial in March and came to the church in May. The 40-year-old church in southeast Georgia has a long history of support for women in ministry. Two other congregations were removed from fellowship by nearly 2,000-vote margins during the Nov. 16 session of the Georgia Baptist Convention over the issue of homosexuality. Oakhurst Baptist Church, Decatur, and Virginia-Highland Baptist Church, Atlanta, have ordained openly homosexual people as deacons, according to media accounts. Oakhurst also has a homosexual associate pastor. (Baptist Press, 11/4/99 and 11/16/99)

## Prayer for the Lost Called "Abrasive"

The Southern Baptist Convention took heat from liberal critics after printing pamphlets urging believers to pray for the conversion of Hindus. Keith Parks, who spent 13 years as president of the convention's International Mission Board, charged

the Baptists with "fundamentalism," complaining that "we need to cultivate personal relationships rather than launch a new crusade that's confrontative and abrasive." (*World*, 11/6/99)

## Liberty University Now a Southern Baptist School

"We look forward to providing quality Christian education to the students of 47,000 Southern Baptist churches across the U. S., while we continue serving thousands of others from many different evangelical backgrounds," said Liberty University president John M. Borek Jr. Liberty reached a formal agreement with the executive board of the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia on November 16. The new relationship will encourage Southern Baptist students to attend Liberty and provide the possibility of financial support of the school by Southern Baptist churches. Liberty chancellor Jerry Falwell's ties to the SBC began three years ago when he made a contribution to the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and began attending annual meetings of the SBC

## Missionary Murdered In Togo

Timothy R. Matchett, Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) missionary, was gunned down in Lomé, Togo, in

October. Matchett, 44, was driving to the U.S. Embassy guest house in the West African capital city after church to pick up his wife and three children when two men on a motorcycle accosted him outside the guest house and shot him twice, instantly killing him. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 11/1/99)

## China's Christians Suffer

While China recently celebrated 50 years of communist rule, house church Christians continue to face stiff labor camp sentences for meeting in homes and refusing to join the state registered and controlled church. Christians in China fear that eight house church leaders arrested in August 1999 could be executed if the government decides to label them as "cult leaders," as was the case of leaders belonging to the Fulan Gong cult group. (*Christian News*, 11/1/99)

## Saudi Authorities Raid Christian Worship Services

Saudi Arabia's strict Islamic police raided two private Christian worship meetings in the capital of Riyadh on October 15, detaining nearly 40 of the 267 worshippers present and confiscating all the Bibles, Christian materials, and musical instruments found in the two houses. More than half of the arrested Christians were reportedly set free by

nightfall the same day. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 10/18/99)

## Baptist Pastor Jailed and Fined in Turkmenistan

Turkmen Baptist pastor Rahim Tashov, from the eastern town of Turkmenabad (formerly Chardjou), was freed on November 12 after spending 12 days in the investigation prison in Turkmenabad. Tashov was charged an administrative fine of 200,000 manats, one month's minimum wage, before being freed. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 11/19/99)

## San Francisco Sued for Hateful Speech

The American Family Association (AFA), Don Wildmon, Family Research Council, and Kerusso Ministries filed suit in federal court on October 6 against the City and County of San Francisco for official actions allegedly taken by the City condemning religious institutions and believers for calling homosexuality sinful. The lawsuit alleges that in a letter sent at the direction of the Board of Supervisors, AFA, FRC, and others were condemned as being directly responsible for crimes committed against gays and lesbians, including the murder of Matthew Shepard. Stephen Crampton, Chief Counsel for AFA Center for Law & Policy, stated that San Francisco's actions are "the

## NOTABLE QUOTES

clearest example of governmental hostility toward religion that he has seen in this country. This fierce rhetoric by San Francisco is an open invitation to homosexuals to commit acts of violence against Christians," continued Crampton. (American Family Association, 10/6/99)

### California Laws Support Homosexual Teachers

California governor Gray Davis signed three pro-homosexual bills into law October 2, including a measure buttressing the rights of homosexual and lesbian public school teachers. Davis selected the date to coincide with his and President Bill Clinton's presence at a fund-raising "Gay and Lesbian Presidential Dinner" in Beverly Hills, the governor's spokeswoman said. (*Maranatha Newswatch*, 10/10/99)

### Presidential Candidates and Marriage

Presidential candidates Gary Bauer, Pat Buchanan, Steve Forbes, and Alan Keyes have signed a pledge to uphold "the sacred institution of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman" and to oppose attempts to define it to encompass homosexual relationships. Republican candidates George W. Bush, governor of Texas, and Sen. John McCain of Arizona have not yet signed the pledge. Democratic candidates Al Gore and Bill Bradley refused to sign the pledge. (Baptist Press, 10/20/99) Also, Gore and Bradley each have come out against the Knight initiative, a measure on the March 2000 ballot in California that would prevent the state from recognizing homosexual "marriages." (*Christian News*, 10/11/99)

Organized religion is a sham and a crutch for weak-minded people who need strength in numbers.—Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura

We are witnessing a rising level of bigotry against people of faith, especially Christians. . . . Whether we wish to admit it or not, Christians are now subject to ridicule, mistreatment, and bigotry—pure and simple. . . . When the rights of people of faith are trampled, newspapers and other leaders in our nation are either silent or complicit. Why is this? What about the rights of people of faith?—Majority Leader Dick Armey (R.-Tex.), in a September 29, 1999, speech in the U. S. House of Representatives

To compel any citizen to provide in taxes for the propagation of that which he disbelieves is both cruel and tyrannical.—Thomas Jefferson

Billy Graham said that on Judgment Day, there may be people who enter the Kingdom who have not called themselves Christians. . . . On the Charlie Rose show, I said that I am not convinced that Jesus only lives in Christians. I stand by that statement. I myself have encountered many people who believe in and follow the Jesus of the New Testament, but who feel unable to call themselves Christians because they do not identify themselves with the sold-out Jesus of America's cultural Christian establishment.—Tony Campolo, evangelical theologian and professor at the American Baptist-affiliated Eastern College

The president betrayed his moral trust with the American people. He betrayed it badly. He lied to the American people, and he lied in a court of law. That is a permanent blot on our government and on his stewardship specifically. It was my lot to be the cop on the beat. I was an honest cop.—Ken Starr

In my youth, science was more important to me than either man or God. I worshipped science. Its advance had surpassed man's wildest dreams. It took many years for me to discover that science, with all its brilliance, lights only a middle chapter of creation. I saw the aircraft I love destroying the civilization I expected it to save. Now I understand that spiritual truth is more essential to a nation than the mortar in its cities' walls. For when the actions of a people are undergirded by spiritual truths, there is safety. When spiritual truths are rejected, it is only a matter of time before civilization will collapse.—Charles Lindbergh

### Bradley Bothered by Fundamentalism

Democrat presidential candidate Bill Bradley has repudiated the evangelical Christian faith he once embraced. In a tract published by the American Tract Society in the 1960s, Bradley stated: "I've made my choice. I love Jesus Christ and I try to serve Him to the best of my ability." He says he later became bothered by the exclusive truth claims of "fundamentalism." (*World*, 10/30/99)

### Porn at the Public Library

Children may not be safe in the local library because of policies that allow even children unrestricted access to pornography. That extreme policy flows out of the American Library Association (ALA), a private organization that is the largest national library association in the world, with a membership of more than 55,000. The ALA opposes any restrictions on access to pornography in public libraries—even for children. Many public libraries adhere to this ALA policy and refuse to place filters on their computers to screen out sexually explicit web sites. ALA spokeswoman Judith Krug defended its stand, saying, "Blocking material leads to censorship. That goes for pornography and bestiality too. If you don't like it, don't look at it." (*AFA Alert*, 10/14/99)

### Supreme Court Refuses to Hear School Choice Challenge

The U.S. Supreme Court has declined to review a ruling upholding Arizona's tax credit for contributions to

religious school scholarship funds, marking the second time in a year the justices have refused to consider a challenge to a state's education-choice program. The high court announced October 4 it would not hear an appeal of a January decision by the Arizona Supreme Court, which found the state's tax credit for private schools, including religious ones, is constitutional. The high court's refusal means the law remains in effect in Arizona but is not binding in other states. (Baptist Press, 10/5/99)

**Partial-birth Abortion Bans Upheld**

The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Illinois and Wisconsin laws banning partial-birth abortion. The 5-4 decision reversed a lower court's ruling that the Illinois law was unconstitutional and an appeals panel's order that temporarily stopped enforce-

the issue predicted that the U. S. Supreme Court would have to settle the matter. (World, 11/6/99)

**Elementary Students Targeted at Homosexual Conference**

More than 700 teachers, administrators, high school and college students, and homosexual activists attended the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) third annual conference, "Teaching Respect for All '99." The conference was held October 1-3 in Atlanta. Those attending heard GLSEN Executive Director Kevin Jennings say his organization would be "shameless" in promoting pro-homosexual programs to all 15,000 schools in the country. "If we do our jobs right, we're going to raise a generation of kids who don't believe [the claims of] the religious right," GLSEN director of communications James

Duby of the National Education Association said at a workshop, "The fear of the religious right is that the schools of today are the governments of tomorrow. And you know what? They're right." More than 100 teenagers attended the conference, including 20 high school students who were there courtesy of scholarships from Levi Strauss. Other corporate sponsors included American Airlines, Eastman Kodak, and IBM. (Baptist Press, 10/8/99)

**An Internet Church?**

Totalechurch is an incorporated church that has no building, has worship services and devotions held in hundreds of homes all over the world, and boasts 200 members who've never seen one another. Totalechurch is one of the first totally Internet churches in cyberspace. It's pastor, Lyndon Glaesman, is an alumnus of a Southern Baptist seminary. (Baptist Press,

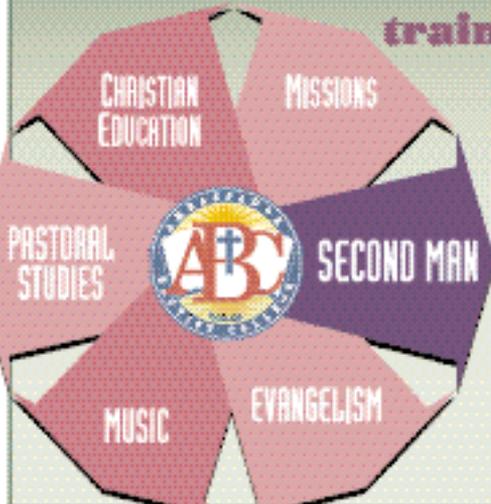
**Catholic Church Still Granting "Indulgences"**

The Catholic Church has issued a new 100-page edition of the *Manual of Indulgences*. One way to gain an indulgence is to make a pilgrimage to Rome in the year 2000 and visit various historic Catholic sites. Other ways to gain indulgences are to "be pleasant to immigrants, pray at work, and give up alcohol and cigarettes." (Ecumenical News International, 9/22/99)

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship.

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## “Sooner or Later, We All Get Bit”

**M**uch of the suffering we endure as servants of the Lord is not the noble kind. Peter made it plain that there is no glory in suffering for our own faults. The thing that pleases and honors God is to suffer patiently when we have done well. What is surprising about Christian service is how often we are surprised when it happens. One of the occupational hazards of the ministry is the exhaustion of forbearance. We might wish for a ministry where those we teach would just listen and obey without stubbornness, but we must realize that we have things to learn ourselves. The blessing of ministerial exasperation is that it exposes the self-reliance that produces it.

On a recent visit to my dentist's office, I asked him if he had ever been bitten by a patient. He had. Often. Most bites were accidental or reflexive, but there was at least one incident that was deliberate. A teenage girl who was never happy about dental work, and who was particularly unhappy at the time, had angrily ordered the dentist, "Stop hurting me!" She apparently had not yet realized that "painless dental work" is an oxymoron. In any case, she had looked him right in the eye, biting down for all she was worth on the poor man's finger until he howled in pain.

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Well, it wasn't nearly as bad as what I almost did," he assured me. He just left the room until his finger stopped throbbing, then returned

with the girl's mother. We went on to discuss whether patients should be expected to tolerate the reflexive actions of deliberately bitten dentists just as dentists are expected to tolerate reflexive biting. Probably not, we concluded. In our mutual wisdom, we ended with this piece of grammatically challenged brilliance, "Sooner or later, we all get bit."

*“Good news: your most troublesome critic has left the church; Bad news: he has been made chairman of the Community Welcome Wagon.”*

I drove home that day thinking about the many times when I have been "bitten" by people I was trying to help. It reminded me of the time one of my sons was badly bitten by the family pet. The little dog had an ear infection and quickly gave my son a lifelong illustration of the truth of Proverbs 26:17 when he ignored its wisdom. As he sat there waiting for the novocaine to take effect so he could have his faced stitched up, he tearfully observed, "I didn't mean to hurt him." Later, as the little cocker spaniel was curled up on the foot of his bed, I had just tucked him in when he said, "I know he didn't mean to hurt me either."

Surely I'm not the only pastor who has felt like my dentist did while his hand was aching, or my son while he waited for his stitches. Although we suppress the carnal desire to defend ourselves, patiently listening while someone we are trying to help literally rails on us for touching a sore spot, without the grace of God we cannot deal with the brooding frustration of being unjustly blamed. Of course, this page is probably read by those

who are neither pastors nor dentists, but all of us in sincere attempts to help others will be met by responses that cause us real pain. "Sooner or later, we all get bit."

One of the most sobering realizations that eventually comes to most, if not all, in the ministry is the fact that we have been seeking the approval of men rather than the glory of God. Even when we think we have conquered it, wearing our ecclesiastical battle scars with quiet confidence, the demon still lurks in the shadows. We are almost proud of the rejection of those whose positions we scorn; what hurts is the rejection of those we truly care about—the pain of unrequited pastoral love. But it is a bitter-sweet reality of the ministry.

A pastor friend recently e-mailed me a humorous list of "Good News/Bad News" quips. My favorite was this one, "Good news: your most troublesome critic has left the church; Bad news: he has been made chairman of the Community Welcome Wagon." The chuckle helps, but it won't change us. Commiseration with our comrades is not always Scriptural encouragement. Unlike my dentist, we can't just tell the bad member's mother. But we can tell our Father. He truly understands. After all, no one has been "bitten" as bad as He has, and continues to be. It is precisely at the point when our most Christlike efforts bring genuine suffering that we are to rejoice at the opportunity to be partakers of the sufferings of Christ.

Remember, "Sooner or later, we all get bit."

Remember, "Sooner or later, we all get bit."

<sup>1</sup> "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears."



DR. JOHN C. VAUGHN

# What's on the Web

Bob Whitmore

The pace of technological development is moving so fast that it's difficult to keep up. More and more options are available for users of the Internet, in addition to the usual text files found at most sites. For instance, instead of posting the November/December 1999 issue of *Frontline* on our web site ([www.f-b-f.org/frontline](http://www.f-b-f.org/frontline)) as separate text files, we posted it in a format that looks just like the printed version. (This issue will be posted in the same way, and we'd like to know what you think about it.) The file takes longer to open, but we hope that being able to enjoy the graphics and ads will make the wait worthwhile. A few web sites even have short "movies" posted, so expect to see more of them in the next few years as faster Internet connections become more widespread.

Meanwhile, sounds files are becoming more and more prevalent on the Internet. In the past we have mentioned web sites that contain music and other sound files. If you would like to hear sermons from some old-time preachers such as J. Frank Norris or John R. Rice, you will find them at BaptistFire ([www.baptistfire.org](http://www.baptistfire.org)). In addition to message by these famous Fundamentalists, sermons from prominent Southern Baptist conservatives can be found here as well. If you get tired of listening to the preaching, you may enjoy reading some of the book reviews or some of the many news items posted here.

A couple of issues ago we examined

a number of web sites pertaining to evangelism and missions. Due to a lack of space we had to drop some that we wanted to share with you. So, before I forget them again, here they are. The Answers to Jehovah's Witnesses site ([www.serve.com/larryi](http://www.serve.com/larryi)) contains news, an online guide to cults, and many audio and text files relating to evangelizing adherents of this cult. The Watchman Fellowship site contains an index of cults and religions and many resources for dealing with Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, as well as those involved in New Age and occult practices. See [www.watchman.org](http://www.watchman.org). The Mormonism Research Ministry ([www.mrm.org](http://www.mrm.org)) contains resources challenging the claims of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Christian Research and Evangelism site ([www.pionet.net/~cultrsch](http://www.pionet.net/~cultrsch)) provides helpful information on Mormonism, Catholicism, and the Jehovah's Witness cult. One more good source of information is the Apologetics Index ([www.apologetic-index.org](http://www.apologetic-index.org)). It "provides a database and glossary of information on cults, sects, new religious movements, doctrines, apologetics and counter-cult organizations" and more.

Lastly, I need to make a correction. In the last issue I mentioned the "New English Translation, a version that Fundamentalists reject." I'm sure many Fundamentalists would reject it simply because it isn't the KJV, but I confused it with the older New English Bible, which was an untrustworthy translation. Thanks to the two readers who let me know of my mistake.



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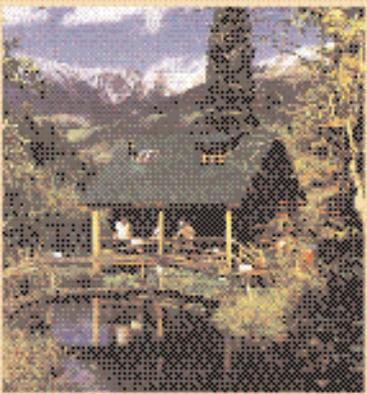
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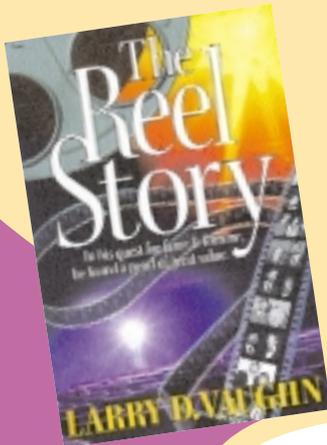
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CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

## Spencer H. Cone

Doug Kutilek

**T**he name Spencer H. Cone (1785–1855) is by no means a “household name” in America today, not even among Baptists. Yet, in the first half of the 19th century, Spencer H. Cone was indeed a household name, not just among Baptists (his own denomination), but among American Christians generally.

Born in Hopewell, New Jersey, into a devout Baptist family, Cone was an avid reader as a youth and studied both Greek and Latin. He entered Princeton College at age 12 but was compelled by family circumstances to leave school and seek employment when he was 14. Cone sought and gained employment as a school teacher and was the sole financial support for his family. He continued in this profession until about age 20, when he became a stage actor. Though he disliked acting, he was nevertheless among the best of American actors. His voice and elocution were superb. He left off acting when he was 27.

At age 27, Cone, as yet unconverted, purchased some of the writings of John Newton, the slave-trader turned preacher. Reading Newton’s works, followed by the close study of Scripture, brought Cone to repentance and faith. Shortly thereafter, he was asked to speak in a church in the Washington, D.C., area. Crowds flocked to hear him. Soon he became chaplain to the United States Congress, and then a pastor in Alexandria, Virginia (a church made up of about equal numbers of black and white members), where he remained until called in 1823 to the Oliver Street Baptist Church in New York City. That metropolis was the scene of Cone’s labors to the end of his life. He pastored two different churches there over the next three decades.

As a pastor, no one in America excelled Cone in his zeal for the cause of world missions. He was especially effective at raising money to support various missionary enterprises. Among these was the publication of various translations of the Bible.

Cone was an enthusiastic supporter of and leader in the American Bible Society (founded 1816), until he was forced by his convictions to leave that society in 1836. In 1833, some of the society’s members raised objections to the ABS’s sponsoring of missionary Bible translations which translated *baptizo* by words meaning “immerse,” an allegedly “sectarian” rendering (though an accurate translation). The ABS thereupon withdrew its financial aid to Baptist-made translations in Asia, though it had funded them before, and despite the fact that Baptists

were the single most generous denomination supporting the ABS.

Cone and many others—Baptists and non-Baptists—withdraw from the ABS and organized the American and Foreign Bible Society (A&FBS) in 1837, with the express purpose of making available the most accurate Bible translations in the languages of the world. Cone became chairman of this society. Later, it was proposed by some A&FBS members (including Cone) that the common English version be subjected to the same standard as mission field versions; that is, that a revision of the KJV be made to make it as accurate as the mission field versions of Carey and Judson.

This proposal caused a rift in the A&FBS, resulting in Cone’s resignation and the organization of the American Bible Union in 1850, which organization Cone headed until his death in 1855. This society sponsored “immerse” versions on the mission field as well as a revision of the KJV, which appeared in the 1860s. (This interesting chapter in Baptist history is discussed in detail in Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, pp. 893–918.)

Besides his missions and Bible society labors, Cone was elected four times to the presidency of the Triennial Convention (1832, 1835, 1838, 1841). The Triennial Convention was a once-every-three-years national meeting of Baptists in America, both North and South, before they split in the 1840s over slavery. This was more or less the equivalent to being elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention today. At any rate, it is a mark of the great esteem in which Cone was held by his peers that he was elected to this office four times, and he would have been re-elected yet again had he not refused the honor.

In doctrine, Cone was a moderate Calvinist and practiced closed communion in his churches (Scriptural baptism as a prerequisite to the Lord’s table). He preached extemporaneously and always without notes (hence his literary remains are rather few).

The biography of Cone by his sons (whose names are not given) contains a great mass of detailed information about Baptists in general and Cone in particular. In the absence of this book, the reader can find brief accounts of Cone and his life in Armitage’s Baptist history, pp. 904–906 (Armitage delivered Cone’s funeral sermon), and in William Cathcart, *A Baptist Encyclopedia*.

Doug Kutilek is a commuting missionary to Romania based in Wichita, Kansas. He is the author of *J. Frank Norris and His Heirs: The Bible Translation Controversy*.



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