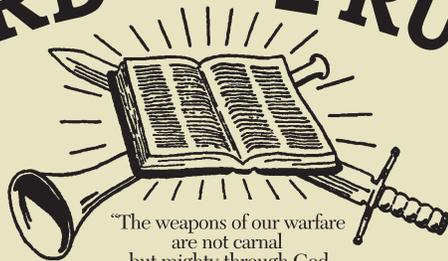


# The SWORD and TRUMPET



"Blow ye  
the Trumpet  
and warn  
the People."

"The weapons of our warfare  
are not carnal  
but mighty through God  
to the pulling down of strongholds."

"Take the Sword  
of the Spirit  
which is  
The Word of God."

## *Guidelines*



GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

JANUARY 2005

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## The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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**SWORD AND TRUMPET GUIDELINES** monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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# Person of the Month:

## George Washington Carver (Circa 1864-1943)

Were it not, I believe, for the intervention and work of God in his life, George Washington Carver would be completely unknown to us today. He was born in obscurity to slave parents in Diamond Grove, Missouri, sometime between the years of 1859-1864.

George's early life was fraught with hardships. Two differing accounts record events of his life as a baby and young child. One report says that it was hard for his master, Moses Carver, to keep his slaves since Missouri was a border state in this period of our nation's history. Therefore, Master Carver sent his slaves to Arkansas, including young George and his mother. After the war Carver learned that all his former slaves had disappeared, with the exception of George who was suffering from whooping cough. Master Carver had George returned to his home and he and his family took care of him until he was well again. The other report states that a band of night raiders stole George and his mother and that his master bought him back in exchange for a racing horse, but his mother was never found. There is no record concerning his father. Regardless of which account is most accurate, God was preparing George for a life of service that would bring glory to Him.

Master Carver reminded George that he was free, but George stayed with the Carvers until he was 10 or 12 years of age. Then he left to pursue an education. He wandered about working at whatever jobs he could find in order to survive. George had artistic ability, with a good sense of color and form, and enjoyed drawing. He also had quite an interest in plants, rocks, and animals. His education, received from books and his experiences, was incomplete, but in his late 20s he was able to receive a high school education in Minneapolis, Kansas, while at the same time working on a farm. From high school he wanted to go to a university in Kansas but was rejected because of his race, so he went to Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa, where he studied piano and art. From there he transferred to Iowa State Agricultural College. In 1894 he received his degree in agricultural science and accepted an appointment at the school as an assistant botanist. During this time he started a collection of fungi that grew to almost 20,000 species. As a result of his work he became well-known in his profession. While at the college he also received his Master of Science degree in 1896. Then in the fall of that year he went to Tuskegee Institute to head up the newly organized department of agriculture. He believed that this industrial type of education provided by Tuskegee would help benefit his race and solve race problems.

George was very concerned about his people as well as the economy of the South. He wanted to give his life to help others. After the Civil War the Southern economy was in shambles. He began to devote his life to research projects that would be of benefit to Southern agriculture. He showed farmers in the South how they could improve their economic condition. George W. Carver received much praise as a teacher, lecturer, and experimenter. God gave him an unusual ability to be able to find many different ways to use foods and how to preserve them. By the year 1910 he had devoted most of his life to research.

*(continued on page 4)*

# Offensive Love: Reflecting God's Inclusive Heart

by Steve Strauss

Around the world the Holy Spirit is moving, and the enemy is desperate. The gospel is spreading rapidly, but where it is being resisted the response is as fierce and hateful as at any time in history. Our desire as Christians to share our faith and stand up for biblical principles has brought on the wrath of people around the world and in our own neighborhoods.

How do you respond to people like this—those in our country or far away who hate us because we're believers in Christ? I am tempted to react either defensively or offensively. For protection, I want to pull up the drawbridge and build walls to protect my family, my church, my values. Or in righteous anger I want to see those who hurt Christians around the world judged, humiliated, and defeated.

Often we slip into an "us-and-them" mentality. But what is God's response? How does He feel about the people who don't like us or who even persecute us? Psalm 87 gives us a glimpse:

1. He has set his foundation on the holy mountain; 2. The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. 3. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God: Selah. 4. "I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me—Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush—and will say, 'This one was born in Zion.'" 5. Indeed, of Zion it will be said, "This one and that one were born in her, and

the Most High himself will establish her." 6. The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: "This one was born in Zion." Selah. 7. As they make music they will sing, "All my fountains are in you."

It's clear from the first three verses that God loves His people and thoroughly enjoys being among them. He loves Jerusalem, calling it "His establishment" or "His place." It's like there is a flashing neon light over the city of Jerusalem that says, "God's Place." Because He loves His people, God made this His dwelling place. Verse 2 states that He particularly loves the gates—where people gather. It is one of the most vulnerable parts of the city, but God's presence grants security.

At the end of the third verse the word *Selah* indicates a pause after the first stanza. This suggests that the reader should stop and think for a minute about how glorious it is to be with God in His place.

But in verses 4-7 comes the shocking second stanza. There are other people whom God loves—foreigners whom Israel doesn't especially love—and He plans to make them citizens of Jerusalem, with all its benefits and security. Then comes the word *Selah* again. Stop and think about that.

From Jerusalem the camera angle widens to pan the nations of the world and issue a formal proclamation of God's intentions. But this is not just a

**"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:44, 45).**

random sample of *any* nations. These are not just any foreigners, they are Israel's enemies—a constant threat to God's people and their way of life.

And what does God say about all these *foreigners*, these *outsiders*, these *enemies*? They are going to know God! The Hebrew word for “acknowledge” in verse 4 means “to have a special relationship with.” The same word is used of Israel's special relationship with God in Amos 3:2. “You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth.” The psalmist creates the image that these enemies will become native-born citizens of Jerusalem, with all the benefits of citizenship.

In verses 4 and 5 the psalmist paints a picture of God visiting His temple in Zion and responding with a mixture of mock incredulity and divine joy at whom He sees. It's as if He says, “Wow! Look at all these wonderful new citizens of Jerusalem!” Imagine God pumping His fist as He says, “Yes! Look at them, here in My temple. I'm going to make them all citizens of My place.”

Then, as the psalm fades out in verse 7, we see the picture of a grand international party of people enjoying the presence of God in the fullness of life and salvation in Jerusalem. The new citizens respond, “All my fountains are in you.” Fountains or springs are often used as biblical imagery for life. These springs are found only in Zion, not in the nations from which these people have come.

Israel's response: “We knew God was going to rule and judge the pagan Gentiles, but this is too much. You mean He's going to make them equal with us? He's going to give those Gentile dogs, our enemies, equal citizenship with us and share *our* inheritance with *them*?”

God didn't say this just to shock ancient Israel, but to remind them of *why* He had called them to be His special people . . . so they could attract others to their God and invite them to His

party. This is the truth of Genesis 12:1-3 and Psalm 67:1-5: God blessed Israel so the *nations* might bless Him. This is the truth David shouted when he went to face Goliath: God will give us the victory so that the world will know Him, the God of Israel.

Although Christian believers are not the Israelites, God's perspective hasn't changed. His devotion to His followers does not negate His love for those who have made themselves *our* enemies. He exults in the prospect that some of those people who are working against us will join His party. And He wants us to love them too. In fact He wants us to invite them to the party.

Who are the Babylonians and Philistines in our lives? Whom do we not like because they don't like us? Most of us have faced the sneer of people who think that Christians are deluded, or even dangerous. Sometimes they make fun of our lifestyle or exclude us; sometimes they take advantage of us.

And beyond those who simply dislike us or make life difficult for us, there are people who aggressively attack our values: media that mock us, gay-rights advocates who attack a biblical understanding of marriage, abortion-rights people who threaten the unborn. Some-

## How Can We Love “Them”?

Get to know those around you of other faiths. The man at the convenience store, the woman you work with. If you have never met them, ask them about their background and their faith. Say, “Can we have coffee so you can tell me about your faith?” Then listen!

Take advantage of religious holidays—theirs and yours.

Offer to go for a walk with them, go shopping with them. Be seen with them and show them the love of Christ. You can share the gospel after you develop a genuine friendship.

times we feel threatened by people of other faiths, especially when followers of those faiths are hostile to Christians in other countries.

How can we invite these people to join God's party? Here are a few steps:

**1. Get God's attitude.** We can begin by confessing our wrong attitude and asking God to give us His heart and mind. Then we can try to look at them the way He sees them—"they" are potentially "us."

**2. Reorder our lives.** We can stop being defensive and begin sharing God's love with those near us and those far away.

God loves the people whom we don't particularly like—those who are hateful to us, who resist us as never before. He loves them as much as He loves us. And He calls us to invite them to His eternal, international party. By sharing the good news and watching the Holy Spirit do His work of reconciliation, we can bring God joy and enter into His celebration as He saves even those who were once our enemies. ■

—Used with permission. Dr. Steve Strauss is the U.S. director of Serving in Mission (SIM).

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#### GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER . . . cont'd.

Brother Carver's greatest discoveries were with regard to legumes such as peanuts and soybeans. These crops restored nitrogen and needed proteins to the soil. This liberated the South economically as they did not need to depend solely on cotton that depleted the soil of important nutrients.

In 1896 peanuts were not even recognized as a crop but over the next 50 years they became one of the six leading crops in our nation. They also were second only to cotton as a cash crop in the South by 1940.

As a result of all his research 300 derivative products were developed from peanuts, 118 from sweet potatoes and 75 from pecans, to name just a few!

He received several prestigious honors and awards, such as being elected as a fellow of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce (an award given to only a few Americans by Great Britain); the Spingarn Medal in 1923 for his distinguished work in agricultural chemistry; and in 1939 the Roosevelt medal for his many contributions to science.

In 1935 he worked in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Later on in his career he was asked to work with Thomas A. Edison, which would have meant a large salary for him but he turned it down. Presidents Coolidge and Franklin D. Roosevelt visited him, and foreign governments asked for his help and counsel in agricultural matters.

Eighteen schools bear his name; in 1945 Congress designated January 5th as George Washington Carver Day; and in 1951 the George Washington Carver national monument was established on the Missouri farm where he was born.

But what of his faith? you may ask. There is no record of his conversion but his life and witness tell of his relationship with the Lord. In spite of all his accomplishments, some scientists were suspicious of him because he openly proclaimed that he and the Lord worked together in the laboratory. A mild, soft-spoken, modest, and very humble man, he was criticized by some of his own people because he attempted to "live" out his Christian faith and boldly acknowledged his faith in Christ and His Word. He was seemingly uninterested in the rewards and pleasures available to him in this life and even gave his lifesavings of \$33,000 to the G. W. C. Foundation for Agricultural Research. He attributed all his success and ability to God.

George Washington Carver went home to be with the Lord January 5, 1943—from a modest beginning in obscurity to a life of great service in the kingdom of God. —Gail L. Emerson



## **From the Editor's Desk**

Paul M. Emerson

# **Ministerial Training Institute to Begin**

This is not the first time that this column has been taken up with the discussion of ministerial training. This writer well remembers the counsel of an older minister many years ago: "Young man, never stand before a congregation unprepared to handle the Biblical text while praying that the Lord will fill your mouth. The Lord will fill your mouth all right, with the same thing that He fills the cow's mouth—hot air!" The New Testament ministry was a trained ministry. The first church leaders were trained by the Lord Himself for three years. That training was passed on to other "faithful men."

The issue today is not whether we need a trained ministry. Rather, it has to do with the content of that necessary training. In the recent past many have been trained in error rather than in truth and some have taken that to mean that all training is erroneous. The fear of proper training has led to naivete and the acceptance of other errors. The minister is commanded to be a student in order to rightly understand and communicate God's truth. Lack of Biblical training has led, in some cases, to ministerial and/or doctrinal malpractice.

Many in today's conservative Anabaptist movement are fearful and opposed to higher education. We would readily admit that higher education has been used by

the devil in many cases to war against the Faith. This has taken place because false teachers have been allowed to teach falsehood in the institutions. The failure has not been because truth has been taught but because truth has not been taught.

The Shepherd's Institute is not conceived as an educational institution in the commonly understood sense. Instead, its purpose is to provide good tools for the minister's toolbox. It is committed not to biasly indoctrinate with a particular tradition. Where conservative Anabaptists disagree, the student will be directed to a mentor who holds the same view as that student's home congregation. This will enable men to participate in The Shepherd's Institute from various conservative Anabaptist traditions without fear of being compromised.

The Shepherd's Institute expects to conduct its first classes for ministers in November 2005. The format would be a two-week residence followed by twenty weeks of mentored home study. Courses will be graduate level. The only prerequisite is recognized ministerial ordination. Funds are needed for this important ministry. Please designate your gift for "The Shepherd's Institute" and send it to *Sword and Trumpet*, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803-0575. ■

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



*A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**JANUARY 2, 2005**

***Jesus Begins His Ministry***

Mark 1:14-28

The five lessons for January are taken from the Gospel of Mark and focus on the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the calling and commissioning of His disciples. The first eight verses of Mark 1 introduce us to the one who prepared the way for Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist. Verses 9-13 report Jesus' baptism by John and His period of temptation in the wilderness. Be sure to do some background reading on the Gospel of Mark and read the entire book several times this month.

Today's lesson begins at verse 14, which provides the context for the beginning of Jesus' ministry. John's work was accomplished. He had announced the coming of the Greater One, and now, being in prison, it was time for this Greater One to assume His role of announcing the kingdom of God, calling people to repent and accept the gospel of salvation. (See Daniel 2:44.)

The second act of Jesus' ministry, as recorded by Mark, was the calling of the first four of His disciples. Jesus knew His ministry would be relatively short and He needed capable men to carry on His work after He was gone. He would eventually have twelve. (We meet Matthew next Sunday and the rest the next.) Jesus' disciples, as we will see, were ordinary men, working men, not highly educated, but men of varying capabilities and strengths. Subsequent history proves the validity of Jesus' choices.

These first four disciples were fishermen: rough, rugged men of Galilee. Three of them—Peter, James, and John—would come to be known as the “inner circle three.” They seemed to be closest to Jesus and shared some special experiences with Him. These men had all likely met Jesus before (see John 1:35-42), so the call to follow may not have been quite as abrupt as it appears. However, they responded without hesitation to Jesus' invitation to follow Him in a life of discipleship and service.

At the onset of His ministry, Jesus continued His practice of going to the synagogue on the sabbath day. However, no longer simply an attendee, He now used the opportunity to teach and instruct. His teaching was immediately recognized as being with a level of authority not observed in the scribes. His authority, of course, came from Himself, not from a secondary source. (See question #4.)

Another aspect of Jesus' ongoing ministry began here in the synagogue that sabbath day—the healing of the man with an unclean spirit. Note how the demons recognized Jesus for who He was, often before man acknowledged Him. (See also Matthew 8:29; James 2:19.) Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and he had no choice but to depart from the man, but not without a parting struggle.

Again, the onlookers were amazed and questioned what new doctrine this might be and just who this must be who exercised such power and authority. The time of Jesus' revealing Himself had begun, and from this beginning His fame began to spread. His ministry had begun. There

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**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

was no turning back. He was in the public eye.

### ***For thought and discussion***

1. Mark writes in a very concise and forthright manner, making frequent use of the word *straightway*, implying action and movement. Be alert to this writing style as you study these lessons from the Gospel of Mark.
2. Study the lives of the disciples. Why did Jesus choose those whom He did? Notice their particular individual strengths and abilities.
3. These four fishermen left their livelihood without hesitation to follow Christ. Why is it so often difficult in our day to find people willing to commit themselves to a life of discipleship and service?
4. In regard to the authority with which Jesus taught, reflect on the difference between one teaching what he knows and lives as opposed to one merely teaching from a book what others have said. Who is most believable? From whom do you really learn?
5. Make a study of demon possession. Is it prevalent today? How do we recognize it? What can we do about it? Discuss.

## **JANUARY 9, 2005**

### ***Jesus Calls Matthew***

Mark 2:13-17

In the intervening verses between last Sunday's text and today's, we see Jesus moving about—teaching, healing, and casting out demons. We also notice (1:35) that He took time to be alone and to spend time in prayer, no doubt for strength and courage to go on. His miracles astounded the common people and endeared Him to them. However, the scribes, those pompous keepers of the Law, were less than pleased by His proclamation of the forgiveness of sin. (See 2:1-12.) This implication of deity

provided the root of subsequent conflict between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees.

At the beginning of today's text, we see Jesus again on the move. We find Him by the seaside, where He could no doubt accommodate larger crowds and, also perhaps, because He found Himself no longer welcome in the synagogues, those citadels of orthodoxy so jealously guarded by the self-righteous scribes. It also gave Jesus opportunity to make contact with others who may not have been welcomed into the house of God by its guardians.

Here, by the seashore, Jesus meets Levi. Levi (Matthew, Matthew 9:9) was not a popular person. He was viewed as a traitor and an opportunist by his fellow countrymen. He undoubtedly held the job for financial advantage since whatever he exacted above what Rome required lined his own pockets. A man despised, yes, hated. But Jesus saw in him potential. So He called to him, "Follow me." And Levi got up and followed. He changed occupations. He changed His life—completely.

As with the first four fishermen-disciples, it is likely that Levi had heard Jesus speak and was ready when Jesus called. Nevertheless, his was an immediate and life-changing response. And the skills Levi used in his occupation served him well as a recorder of the life and events of his new Master. The world is richer for Matthew's contribution to the gospel story.

Levi wasted no time sharing his newfound faith with his colleagues. Levi would not likely have had friends outside of his circle of co-workers, so he invited them, along with Jesus and His disciples, for a meal. He wanted other outcasts to be exposed to the message that had changed his life. And they came (v. 15).

Now it is highly unlikely that the scribes and Pharisees were invited to the meal, but they were observant of the situation. And they found fault. Instead of rejoicing at the change Levi had made, they criticized Jesus for eating with

outcasts and sinners.

Jesus set the record straight. No one was below His friendship. His mission to earth was to call sinners to repentance, and only those who recognized their need and humbled themselves before Him were worthy of salvation. The self-righteous who saw no need in their lives were beyond His help. Such were the scribes and Pharisees. Levi, by contrast, recognized his need, humbled himself, and became a new man, a useful servant of Jesus the Christ.

***For thought and discussion***

1. There are two main aspects of Jesus' ministry. Reflect on them and how they meet man's basic needs.
2. What does Jesus' acceptance of society's outcasts teach us? Should anyone be beyond the scope of our friendship?
3. Levi's ready response should teach us something about commitment and determination. Are we as ready to give up all to follow Christ? Why not? Discuss this issue with your class.
4. Why is it so easy to criticize others doing what we ourselves are loath to do? Is there an element of guilt involved?
5. Think about the level of involvement we may have with sinners in order to win them without ourselves being influenced negatively by their lives. Perhaps class discussion on this issue would be profitable.

**JANUARY 16, 2005**

***Jesus Sends Out the Twelve***

Mark 3:13-19; 6:6b-13

After Jesus called Andrew, Peter, James, John, and Matthew, He continued His teaching and healing ministry. (Read the intervening verses.) Because of His claims and apparent disregard for the Law, conflict between Jesus and the

scribes and Pharisees was escalating. However, the common people heard Him gladly and thronged to Him for healing and to observe His miracles.

As our lesson begins today, Jesus withdrew to a mountain with a group of close followers. Of these He chose twelve to company with Him and to be His companions in ministry. His purpose was to train them and then send them out to preach and to heal. He gave them a message and He gave them power. Jesus was preparing men to carry on His work after His death, resurrection, and ascension back to heaven. He was here giving them hands-on experience.

Five of the Twelve we have met in previous lessons. To those were added Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the zealot, and Judas. Notice the nickname Jesus gave to James and John, "Sons of Thunder." No doubt it was because of their fiery temperament. (See Luke 9:54.) Thomas was a doubter, Nathanael (Bartholomew) initially questioned Jesus' credentials (John 1:43-50), and Judas betrayed Him. It was a diverse group whom Jesus called, and yet He saw in each of them potential for the kingdom of God.

The section of our lesson from Mark 6 shows Jesus sending these men out two by two to teach, preach, heal, and cast out devils. But notice that before sending them out He gave them further opportunity to observe His own ministry. This is highlighted in the intervening chapters. Then, when Jesus felt comfortable with their level of understanding and abilities, He sent them out, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Notice also in verses 30 to 32 that when they returned from their mission they reported to Jesus all they had done. It seems as though He wished to be alone with them for awhile, perhaps for further instruction or fellowship, but the crowds prevented it.

Jesus sent the disciples out by twos,

for support and encouragement in the work. It is always easier when the work is shared and there is someone to turn to for reassurance. Jesus understood this. It's difficult to tell just how long the disciples' mission lasted, but long enough that Jesus spoke of provisions and hospitality.

They were to go unencumbered and dependent on those to whom they ministered for providing their needs. They were to travel light and focus on their mission. Wherever they were welcomed they were to stay. Where they were not welcomed they were to shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against their inhospitality. Jesus pronounced quite a curse on those who rejected His emissaries and His message.

With Jesus' blessing they went. They preached; they healed; they cast out devils. Jesus' ministry expanded because of their faithfulness. And that's the way it should be even today.

#### ***For thought and discussion***

1. In choosing leaders today we would not likely choose such a diverse group of men as Jesus chose to be His disciples. Why did Jesus choose whom He did? Did He see something in them which man did not see?
2. Study the lives of these twelve disciples. What contributions did they make to the cause of Christ in their lifetimes?
3. In our lesson for December 12 God gave Samuel an important lesson in choosing leaders. Jesus also followed that principle in choosing His disciples. What was that principle?
4. In sending the disciples out two by two, Jesus established an important principle for ministry and missions. Reflect on the wisdom of plurality in mission and ministry. Perhaps some class discussion on this would be beneficial.
5. How long should we keep preaching where there is no welcome? Discuss.

## **JANUARY 23, 2005**

### ***Jesus Calls for Total Commitment***

Mark 8:27-38

In the intervening chapters between last Sunday's lesson and today's, we see Jesus feeding the multitudes, healing the sick, confronting the scribes and Pharisees, casting out devils, and continuing to instruct His disciples in the principles of the kingdom. At the beginning of our text today we find Jesus going out away from the crowds with His disciples for a period of private teaching and instruction.

Jesus had reached a watershed in His ministry. Opposition continued to grow even as the multitudes increasingly thronged Him. As He neared the final confrontation which would lead to His death, He needed assurance that these men in whom He had invested so much understood all they had been observing and were convinced that He was indeed the long-expected Messiah.

So, as they walked along, Jesus questioned them as to what they had been hearing from the crowds. The response from the crowds was mixed. All recognized Jesus as a prophet. But they were confused as to who He really was—John, Elijah, or ? Likely their failure to recognize Him as Messiah was that He did not fit their expectation of One who would deliver the nation from the clutches of Rome. They were looking for a political deliverer. Jesus' kingdom was a spiritual one. So He was misunderstood by the crowds, but not by His disciples.

When Jesus turned the question to them regarding Himself, Peter was quick to answer: "Thou art the Christ." Peter, speaking for the Twelve, identified Jesus as the anointed of God. It was certainly gratifying to Jesus to realize that they had caught the essence of His life and teaching. It was essential if they were to continue His ministry after His departure. But because the time was not yet ripe for Him to declare Himself to the

crowds, He bid the disciples keep this knowledge to themselves.

As Jesus began then to reveal more about His coming suffering, death, and resurrection, Peter rebuked Him. How could this be? Why should Messiah die? How could that advance the kingdom? Jesus had to set Peter straight. He was arguing from man's perspective, not God's. It was evident that the disciples still had much to learn concerning Christ's person and work.

Then Jesus turned again to the crowds, laying out the requirements for discipleship—the complete denial of self. Jesus made it clear that to follow Him takes complete and full-time commitment. German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it this way: “When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”

The life of a follower of Jesus is not necessarily an easy life, and it comes at a cost, the cost of personal freedom. But the rewards, as they say, “are out of this world.” There is nothing to compare, even the wealth of the world, to the blessing of hearing God's “well done, faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord.”

#### ***For thought and discussion***

1. In our service for the Lord there is a time for work and a time for reflection and meditation. How do we strike the proper balance between the two?
2. Try to imagine the steep learning curve the disciples faced in coming to a recognition of Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah.
3. Peter recognized Jesus as the Christ, yet could not comprehend that He must die. Explain the gap in his understanding.
4. Are the terms Jesus set forth for discipleship any less stringent today? How are they fulfilled in practical terms? Maybe you should spend some class discussion time on this.
5. Just how does one go about dying to self? Think about it.

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**JANUARY 30, 2005**

### ***Jesus Defines True Greatness***

Mark 10:32-45

In our text today we see Jesus on His final trip to Jerusalem. His ministry was drawing to a close, the final confrontation with the religious authorities was at hand. His face was set toward Jerusalem, His fate sealed. The disciples were troubled and afraid. They didn't understand all that Jesus had been telling them, but they understood enough to know that things were coming to a head. Conflict lay ahead, but they were committed to going on with Jesus. In John 11:16 Thomas said to the other disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” He had caught the significance of the times. Unfortunately, that commitment did not hold when the chips were down.

As they traveled toward Jerusalem, Jesus again used the time to forewarn and prepare His disciples concerning His impending death. He had told them before, but, as we read in Chapter 9, “They understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.” Knowing their confusion, Jesus patiently continued to reveal the sequence of events which would shortly take place.

In the midst of this teaching, James and John seized the opportunity to ask a favor for themselves. (In Matthew's account it was their mother who did the asking.) Their desire was for a position of honor in the Messianic kingdom they supposed Jesus was about to set up. Little did they comprehend at that point what their response to Jesus entailed.

Jesus told them they didn't understand the full implications of their request and, by extension, the nature of His kingdom. They seemed to think that whatever Jesus could endure they could also. Jesus assured them that they would indeed “drink of His cup” and be “baptized with His baptism.” And they were. James was later beheaded by Herod and John was

**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

banished to the Isle of Patmos to quiet his preaching of the gospel. Jesus' answer to James and John also confirmed that these places of honor were not His to bestow, it was His Father's prerogative. (See Matthew 20:23.)

The rest of the disciples were understandably upset when they learned of the request of James and John. They, too, had lived and served with Jesus and were even now in a sense putting their lives on the line for His cause. Were they not also worthy of positions of honor?

Jesus defused the tension by giving a lesson on true greatness. Among the rulers of the world, Jesus said, greatness is exhibited by control over others. Power over others provides a feeling of lordship. But, Jesus goes on to say, that's not the way it should be with you. True greatness in My kingdom is achieved by humble service to one's fellowmen. As Erdman says: "Service is the law of greatness in the kingdom of Christ."

So, Jesus says, if you want to be great, be a servant to others. Think first of their needs, not your own. And to understand how that works, Jesus said, take Me for your example: "I did not come to be

served, but to serve, and to give My life for the benefit of others." True greatness indeed.

### ***For thought and discussion***

1. Try to put yourself in the place of the disciples. Although they did not fully comprehend all that Jesus had been telling them, they were aware that a traumatic confrontation was at hand and that Jesus had predicted His death. How could they make sense of it all? What would have been your likely reaction?
2. What kind of attitude did James and John show by their request? What principles of the kingdom did it violate? How can we guard against that in the church today?
3. Did James and John bring suffering upon themselves for their request? What do you think?
4. Why is it that we are more ready to be honored than we are to suffer? Think carefully through this issue. What basic fault does it speak to?
5. Do you understand the terms of true greatness? Are you willing to pay the price? Think about it. ■

## **Ready Bible Answers**

by *Geo. R. Brunk I*



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# Newslines . . .

by Rebecca Good

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems  
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings  
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

## The Scourge of Graft

Government corruption plagues many countries of the world. Corruption occurs when citizens, usually the poor and powerless, have to pay bribes to obtain services, drivers' licenses, hospital treatment, good education for their children, and favorable court judgments. More and more people around the world are standing up against this injustice, and in many cases, Christians are leading the way. Governments and non-governmental agencies have come to realize that their work has been seriously hindered by the bribery, scams, and looting that infiltrate their projects. Mission agencies are saying that anti-corruption preaching and action must accompany social development.

Transparency International, an anti-corruption advocacy group, ranks countries according to how corrupt they are on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 perceived as highly corrupt. Finland earned the best ranking as the least corrupt nation with a rating of 9.9. The U.S. and Israel tied for 16th place, with a rating of 7.6. Peru ranked at 4.1, China at 3.5, Nicaragua at 2.4, and Kenya received a score of 2.0. Nigeria was rated 1.0, which was the second-worst score, right after Bangladesh which earned the title of most corrupt nation.

President George Bush and other

leaders of the G-8 nations have announced plans to provide anticorruption initiatives in Peru, Nicaragua, Nigeria, and the Republic of Georgia. The G-8 leaders also plan to join the new U.N. Convention Against Corruption. While anticorruption mechanisms must be implemented, these tools will yield little fruit unless strong religious beliefs form the moral backbone of people.

—from *Christianity Today*

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## Iraq's Christian Presence Dwindles

Tens of thousands of Christian Iraqis are leaving their country. At the end of Saddam Hussein's regime, there were around 750,000 Christians in Iraq—about 3 percent of the population. After some church bombings in Baghdad and Mosul in early August, thousands of Iraqi Christians began fleeing to Syria and Jordan.

While discussing the situation in their homeland, some refugees said that in the atmosphere of lawlessness, militants target Iraqi Christians because they are considered wealthy. It is also true that Islamists have attacked liquor, fashion, and music shops because these businesses are offensive to Islamic morals and most are owned by Christians. Also some Islamic militants suspect Christians are collaborators with the U.S. and

the West.

The majority of Iraq’s Christians are Eastern-rite Catholics, which means they recognize the authority of the pope but are autonomous from Rome. Other churches in Iraq include Roman and Syriac Catholics; Assyrians; Greek, Syriac, and Armenian Orthodox; Presbyterians, Anglicans, and evangelicals. Thankfully, not all Christians are leaving—a small Pentecostal group reports that their church is growing and they say that the militants are not intimidating them.

—from *Christian Century*

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### **Fat Monks**

An archaeologist has been studying 100 skeletons found in three abbeys near London. The bones date from the 11th to the 16th centuries. Many of the skeletons show signs of obesity: thickened bones, arthritis, and other joint problems. The monks were more than five times as likely to be overweight as their contemporaries outside the monastery. Paintings from the period also portray monks as downright chubby. “I suspect that food was one of the few pleasures allowed in the monasteries,” says Philippa Patrick, the archaeologist performing the study. —from *The Week*

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### **Christianity and Islam in Nigeria**

In 1960, evangelical Christians in Nigeria comprised 5.7 percent of the population. By 2000, that percent was 23.5. Indeed, when all Christians are counted the country is fairly evenly divided between Christians and Muslims. Followers of the two faiths lived peacefully for decades, but in the past few years, conflicts have arisen. In 2000, 12 northern Nigerian states imposed Sharia law, the Islamic legal code. Since 1999, at least 10,000 people have been killed in interreligious violence, 300 churches destroyed, and 10 pastors and

their families killed. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced. Christians say that Muslims are using *jihad*, holy war, to restore Islamic rule to Nigeria.

According to Craig Keener, in *Christianity Today*, Christians “turned the other cheek,” but as the violence against them continued, some began arming themselves. The international media, which had previously ignored the situation, suddenly picked up the story, which stirred the Muslims to even more counter-revenge against Christians.

The chaos and carnage has deterred the evangelistic efforts of churches and missions. Financial support has taken a toll, and missionaries evangelize cautiously. Around 700 Western and Korean Christian missionaries from 70 agencies work in Nigeria. Muslim missionaries are also active.

Even before interreligious violence broke out, the Muslim Fulani tribe was very resistant to the Gospel. Only one in 10,000 of the nomadic Fulani is a Christian. Most of the Christian Fulani are women, as it is very difficult for a Fulani man to repudiate his Muslim heritage and family expectations. He would likely lose everything, including his life.

“How important it is to forgive others who have hurt us in the past,” wrote one missionary.

Forgiveness is vital for all, but especially now in Nigeria.

—from *Christianity Today* and *Charisma*

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### **Too Few Babies**

Nations around the world are shrinking, that is their total populations are growing smaller. Even China, India, and Latin American countries, long thought of as having too many babies, are shrinking. For some nations like Singapore, this is a problem. That tiny city-state now offers paid maternity leave, thousands of dollars in baby bonuses,

and tax breaks for nannies. The government has even “appointed a ‘population czar’ to reignite the embers of romance” in people overtaken by consumerism.

Singapore is not alone in realizing that too low of a birth rate threatens their future. Increased immigration cannot really make up the difference because many immigrants now come from populations where the birth rate is falling. Immigrants’ children usually have few children. Allan Carlson of the Howard Center states that secularization is a good predictor of decreasing fertility. Populations where religion is viable (like Muslim populations) have higher birth rates. The new secular order “masks an inherently negative attitude toward children.”

In contrast, the Bible consistently calls family and children a blessing.

—from *Christianity Today*

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### The Solution Part of the Problem?

In a recent article in *Christianity Today*, Tim Stafford asks the provocative question, “Can you overturn the divorce culture without taking on its presuppositions, such as the inevitability of sex outside marriage or the supreme reign of the individual’s will?” Or, to think of another way, could marriage counseling with the goal of bringing fulfillment to those who marry, actually be part of the divorce culture, because such counseling assumes marriage should bring self-fulfillment and happiness to both partners?

—from *Christianity Today*

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### The State of Our Unions

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe compile an annual report called “The State of Our Unions.” The following data comes from that work.

\* The divorce rate in America today is twice as high as it was in 1960, though it has declined a bit since it peaked in the early 80s. This is because fewer people are getting married today, which means there are fewer couples to divorce. For those getting married today, the probability of divorce or separation is close to 50 percent.

\* The number of people getting married has declined 40 percent since 1970.

\* More than half of first marriages are preceded by living together. An interesting note: The more partners a person lives with in an unmarried state and the longer an unwed couple lives together before marriage, the more likely the marriage they end up in will disintegrate in divorce.

\* Single-parent families are home to 27 percent of all children, thrice the 1960 number.

Scott Stanley, cofounder of the marriage education course called Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), offers this explanation for the fact that Christians divorce as much as non-Christians. People who marry in their teens with little education and low income have a much greater probability of divorce than the educated and wealthy who marry later. Many people in low education, low income communities profess Christianity. This is in contrast to atheists who have an extremely low divorce rate—most atheists are educated and well-paid. However, if you compare two couples of similar education and background, one Christian and the other irreligious, the Christian couple has a much greater likelihood of a lasting marriage.

—from *Christianity Today*



# At Whose Table Are You Eating?

by Isaac Gehman

When the word *table* is mentioned, our minds turn towards food. In good Mennonite tradition we envision the table to be fully laden with the most tasty and nutritious foods imaginable. In reality our tables are spread with the best meat, vegetables, fruits, and dessert dainties that money can buy. We enjoy all of it and hopefully we are truly thankful to God for His physical provision.

I wonder if we have considered the fact that there is also a spiritual table spread for us at which we need to feed our souls. Are we feeding our souls with the nutritious food that God has to offer or are we feeding them with the junk food of the devil? Paul, writing in 1 Corinthians 10:21 says, "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils." This passage may refer to partaking of communion; however, I believe it is speaking more directly to our personal communion with God on a daily basis. If we take this passage of Scripture literally, Paul is saying it is impossible to feed our souls at both the Lord's table and the devil's table at the same time. In fact in verse 22 he suggests that to attempt to do so provokes God to jealousy. **At whose table is your soul being fed?**

When we think of feeding at the table of the Lord, our minds go to our personal devotional time. This is a time that we set aside each day to read God's Word, to pray, and to meditate. It is a time when we ask God to search our hearts and to change us into the persons He wants us to be. It is a time when the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to cleanse and sanctify our hearts. This personal time with God is very important for the health of our souls, yet many Christians seem to struggle with maintaining this

time with God. Why? John Coblenz in his book, *The Victorious Christian Life*, makes the following comments:

***Every Christian must learn that God's primary concern is not with our devotional time, but with our devotion.*** Devotion is the bedrock of devotions. God draws near to those who are devoted to Him, but those who are not fully devoted may read the Bible and pray till they are blue in the face, and it impresses God not in the least.

No technique, no Bible reading program, and no devotional guide will ever substitute for a heart fully devoted to God. ***Some people must understand that they can never have a meaningful devotional time until they repent of the clutter of worldliness in their hearts and return to complete devotion to God.***

What does it mean to have a devoted life? Let's take a look at the definitions of the words ***devoted*** and ***life***.

The word ***devoted*** is defined as:

1. Feeling or displaying strong affection or attachment: a devoted friend.
2. Having been consecrated; dedicated to a specific person or purpose.
3. To give or apply (one's time, attention, or self) entirely to a particular activity, pursuit, cause, or person.
4. To set apart for a specific purpose or use.
5. To set apart by, or as if by, a vow or solemn act; consecrate.

The word ***life*** is defined as:

Human existence, relationships, and activities in general: Real everyday life.

We should examine the meanings of these two words and then examine our personal commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. **Is there evidence of devotion to God in the way that you live each day?** Jesus said the first and greatest commandment is this: Thou shalt love

the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. That's devotion! A fully devoted life comes only as we are in tune with God. It comes as a result of daily and momentarily trusting God to spread a table that is sufficient to meet all our needs and to be constantly feeding thereon. Anything less is a lack of devotion. **Again I ask, at whose table are you feeding?**

The Old Testament refers to God's table in three locations and each one indicates a specific aspect of His provision that is difficult for His people to understand. **The first one is to realize that God is capable of providing for our needs.** The people of Israel showed the need to learn this as they traveled through the wilderness. In Psalm 78:17-19 it says, "And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" When we examine the biblical record of Israel's journey through the wilderness we see that God was indeed able to spread a table in the wilderness. He gave them water from the rock, manna from heaven, meat by the east wind, and even their clothes and shoes did not wear out. His provision continued until the day that they ate of the corn of Canaan. But we say that was in Bible times; this is 2005. Is God able to furnish a table in 2005? He sure is!

**The second one is to realize that what God spreads on the table is the most nutritious and healthy even though the devil's table looks more appetizing to the flesh.** The Prophet Malachi writes in 1:7, 11-13: "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible." Israel indicated their con-

tempt for the table of the Lord by offering lame and maimed sacrifices when God had asked for that which was perfect and complete. When we as Christians give God less than total devotion we are saying that what He has to offer is not as appealing or as sufficient as what the world is offering. One of the greatest errors of 2005 is for people to profess Christianity and continue to find their satisfaction in the things of the world, suggesting that God's provision is contemptible and incomplete.

**The third one is to realize that God's table is sufficient and bountiful even in circumstances that are harsh and difficult.** In Psalm 23 David says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou **art** with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." As American Christians we tend to expect an easy life as an essential dish on the table of God's provision. We have a hard time understanding how God's table is sufficient for third world Christians when they have such difficult lives. In the midst of all our affluence we forget that a physically and materially easy life has some grave dangers. These dangers include forgetfulness and casualness about spiritual needs and a feeling of being able to live life without God's provision. In Revelation 3:15-18 the Lord speaks to the church of Laodicea and calls them lukewarm because they said, "We are rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing." He counseled them to take a close look at their spiritual condition and to realize that they have spiritual needs that can only be met by zealously seeking Him and His provisions. Can we with David say that God's provision is overflowing even when we face the bear, the lion, Goliath, or need to hide from our enemies in the literal caves of the earth?

The words of the following song have become a real challenge to my life and walk with the Lord.

### **Come and Dine**

Jesus has the table spread where the saints of God are fed.

He invites His chosen people, "Come and dine";

With His manna He doth feed and supplies our every need:

Oh, tis sweet to sup with Jesus all the time!

Come and dine the Master calleth, "Come and dine";

You may feast at Jesus' table all the time;

He who fed the multitude, turned the water into wine,

To the hungry calleth now, "Come and dine."

**What type of delicacies does the Lord spread upon His table?** When we look at the Table of the Lord in the Old Testament we observe that God provided bread from heaven and water from the rock and even on occasion met their desire for meat. We find the Lord's table spread with the essentials for life.

When we come into the New Testament we also find the table spread with the essentials for life. Jesus refers to Himself as the "Water of Life" and the "Bread of Life." In John 6 Jesus says to His disciples, "I am the Bread of Life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger." In John 4 Jesus says that if we are thirsty we should ask Him and He will give us living water which shall spring up within us unto eternal life. He said that those who partake of the living water shall never thirst. To receive eternal life it is essential for one to be a partaker of Jesus Christ, the Bread and Water of Life, by faith.

After one has received life it is necessary to maintain that life. Jesus said in Matthew 4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In John 1 we

find that Jesus is declared to be the Living Word of God. Therefore it is impossible to separate the Living Word from the Written Word and that in order to maintain the eternal life we have received, we must continue to feed upon the living written Word of God. The power of the Written Word to change lives is embodied in the fact that it is also the Living Word.

**God's table was sufficient to meet the needs of His people in the wilderness, but is God able to spread a table that is sufficient to meet the needs of His people in this educated, enlightened, technological age of 2005?** We find the answers to this question in the very character of God and in the Scriptures. When we see God as the one who spoke all things into existence, the great, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, everlasting God, we have no problem believing in His ability to provide. Consider what God says about His provision:

**2 Peter 1:3** *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*

**Colossians 2:3** *In whom [Christ] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

**Philippians 4:9** *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

**2 Timothy 3:16, 17** *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

Do we believe God, or is the enemy of our souls causing us to question God's goodness just like he caused Eve to question it in the Garden of Eden? In many ways Satan is tempting us as he did Eve. She came to the conclusion that God had withheld something from the table that

was essential for her life and happiness. We need to be aware of endtime denials of the sufficiency of God's provision for us. Satan would like us to think that God did not tell us all the truth and that we have truth within ourselves. He would like us to begin to question God's Word and direction and to feed at his table spread with man's humanistic knowledge and understanding.

I would like to call our attention to the warning given by the Apostle Paul to the Colossian Christians. Immediately after he tells them that all wisdom and understanding are hid in Christ he warns them about the need to be well established in their faith. This is necessary lest they be beguiled. He says, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). This danger becomes more deceptive when well-meaning individuals try to reconcile the knowledge of man with the truth of God. Let's consider three areas where professing Christians attempt to reconcile God's truth with humanistic ideas.

**The first area** is described in 2 Peter 3:1-14. Briefly stating the problem, Peter declares that in the endtimes there will be men who are willingly ignorant of the fact that God created the world and that He sent a universal flood in judgment of sinful man. The promotion of the theory of evolution as a fact is clearly fulfilling this prophecy. It is hard to believe that educated man would buy into the idea that the complex universe we observe could have happened by chance. But it is of greater concern when professing Christians try to reconcile evolution with creation by advocating "long days" or "gaps" to accommodate the billions of years that evolution claims. To integrate evolution with creation in order to reconcile humanistic man's ideas with the truth of God is declaring that God did not provide sufficiently in His Word.

When we accept any of the ideas of evolution that deny the truth of Scripture, we are feeding at the wrong table.

**The second area** is suggested in 2 Timothy 3:1-7. Again briefly stating the problem, Paul identifies some of the perils of the endtimes. He indicates one of these perils with the statement, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves." In the last 100 years we have noticed this idea of self-love being advocated by the ideas of humanistic psychology. Sigmund Freud, Abraham Maslow, and others have studied man's behavior from the perspective that he is an evolved animal and as a result have come to some very wrong conclusions. The dangerous part of all this is when professing Christians take these wrong ideas and try to integrate them with the truth of God. As a result Scriptural self-acceptance has been changed into the building up of self-esteem; confession, repentance, and forgiveness have been changed into blame, excuse, and victimization; sin has been changed to addiction and dysfunction; and sanctification into reform. These ideas sound nice and make individuals feel good about themselves, but the danger is that they allow sinful man to continue in his sinful acts and never confront him with his sin nor with the righteousness of a holy God. Those who are trained with these humanistic concepts tend to suggest that we need these ideas of man to make God's salvation "work." This is a direct denial of the sufficiency of God's provision. I ask you, at whose table are you feeding?

**The third area** involves our understanding of the Great Commission. In Luke 24:47, Jesus says that our message to the world is repentance and remission of sins through His shed blood. Today we have a tendency in the church to emphasize meeting man's social, emotional, and relational needs instead of his need for repentance from sin. The large megachurches champion this pattern of "seeker-sensitive" evangelism and in

their attempts to draw in the unchurched from the community they promote casual dress, contemporary music, non-threatening messages, and anything that will make the unsaved visitor feel comfortable. To make sinners comfortable in church without attempting to bring them to confession and repentance of sin and faith in Christ gives them a false hope and is a denial of God's requirements for salvation in Christ. The message of the great commission is still the same for the church of 2005.

Is God able to furnish a table for us in 2005? He sure is! He declares that He has provided all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

In Luke 24 we have the account of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus after the crucifixion of Jesus. The story relates how Jesus joined them as they walked and talked with them about the recent events, but they did not know Him. They did not recognize Him until they sat at the table with Him. "And it

came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him: and he vanished out of their sight" (Luke 24:30, 31). Is it possible that many of us do not recognize Christ for who He is because we aren't eating at His table?

In John 21:12 Jesus gave His disciples an invitation to come and dine at the meal He had prepared specifically for them. The same invitation is extended to His disciples of 2005.

Come and dine the Master calleth,  
"Come and dine";

You may feast at Jesus' table all the  
time;

He who fed the multitude, turned the  
water into wine,

To the hungry calleth now, "Come and  
dine."

Jesus said, "I am that bread of life. . . .  
*This is the bread which cometh down  
from heaven, that a man may eat thereof,  
and not die*" (John 6:48, 50). **At whose  
table are you eating?** ■

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## Both Sides of the Coin

*Can we overcome poverty's envy and affluence's indifference?*

by Andree Seu

Tiff in a teapot: A columnist for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* is mad at the publisher of a free local commuter paper called the *Metro* for turning down an ad by the Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger (contracted with the USDA) that encourages people to apply for food stamps. The testy editorial insinuates patrician motives—that the audience the ad pitches to is not the sort the publisher wants his paper associated with.

But it is something else entirely that catches my eye. In support of his outrage, the columnist writes unproblematically: "Participation in the federal Food Stamp Program has dropped 30 percent in recent years, so the U.S. Department of Agriculture . . . is trying to reposition the program."

I am momentarily discombobulated: Food-stamp usage down 30 percent— isn't that good news? Wasn't that the goal? The halcyon state envisioned by

the 1996 welfare reform bill? Isn't the last thing we want to do is to revive the many-tentacled beast of big government dependence?

Somebody once said that "there are lies, there are damnable lies, and then there are statistics." What does the 30 percent truly mean? To the man who wakes up in the morning and psychs himself to see every stray fact in the universe as a Republican fact, the 30 percent means there are fewer hungry people today: An improving economy and serious welfare-to-work programs are working. To the man who wakes up in the morning and psychs himself to see every stray fact in the universe as a Democratic fact, the 30 percent drop means we're not reaching hungry people. Let's shake the trees with an ad in the *Metro*.

A cynical reader of the *Inquirer* column concludes that legions of scared lilliputian government functionaries out there (themselves dependents at the trough of big government) see handwriting on the wall—the loss of their own jobs if the ship of welfare tanks. That reader will note with a jaundiced eye such developments as New York City's panicked 2000 campaign to enroll warm bodies in the food-stamp program and thereby reverse its alarming decline—not out of unalloyed love for the poor and their nutrition, but as an economic-development issue, since thousands of neighborhood Mom and Pop stores were experiencing withdrawal symptoms from the loss of food-stamp business.

Isn't this a modern rendition of what Demetrius the silversmith said to his fellow craftsmen in Ephesus: Away with Paul! He's blaspheming the magnificent goddess Artemis! (And, by the way, we're losing lucrative statue commissions [Acts 19:21-34].) Wouldn't all of us agree, in saner moments, that in

an ideal world (biblical qualification: a world where some poverty remains, no matter what you do [John 12:8]) charity toward the poor would be, first, voluntary, and second, local—the better to evaluate and minister to the recipient's particular physical and spiritual need. But don't all of us wonder: Would Christians rise to the occasion if Uncle Sam's largess were suddenly dismantled? (Why is it like pulling teeth to raise support for missionaries?)

On the other hand, what is poverty anyway? Is it only daily bread but no vacations in Aruba? My grandmother told me that "poor people should live like poor people," by which politically incorrect statement she meant that I should avoid lust of the eyes and going into debt. And that there is a lot you can do for yourself before you go begging. In fact, there is always a little bit more you can do than you thought you could (see C. S. Lewis's *The Horse and His Boy*, the chase scene).

I have seen poverty from both sides now, and here is my testimony: "Jealousy is fierce as the grave" (Song of Solomon 8:6). Nothing—no logic, no rhetoric, no law—is powerful enough for it. Even the child cries, "It's not fair!"—the first flexing of a radical outcome-based egalitarianism. A chronically poor man with a smidgen of schooling will become a socialist faster than you can say "redistributionism." Especially where the wealthy are contemptuous (Job 12:5), and "voluntary self-restraint is almost unheard of" (Solzhenitsyn).

The vise grip of poverty's envy and affluence's indifference, twin forms of humanism, is broken by one thing and one only: a nurtured hope in a land beyond this one. The blessed have no country but Christ. ■

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# Censoring the Commandments

by Mark D. Avery

Judge Roy Moore's ouster from the Alabama Supreme Court and the subsequent removal of the Ten Commandments monument from public view captured national attention. Both sides of the issue presented their arguments carefully and emphatically. Christians followed the proceedings of this case carefully, knowing that precedence would be established and that the removal of this monument would lead to further purging of Christianity from American culture.

Those who argued this case from the Christian's point of view made the interesting observation that many of our nation's historic buildings have various scriptures engraved in stone. Allowing biblical teaching and biblical statements in public life is not new to our generation. Yet some cultural noisemakers keep trying to force Christianity and Christians into silent irrelevance.

Another attack on the Ten Commandments is being carried out in our society today. Largely, this attack seems to be going unnoticed by the majority of churches and Christians. This time the debate is not forceful and public. It is not broadcast on the nightly news. Instead, the battle against the Ten Commandments is taking place quietly and out of the sight of the general public.

The fight being waged at present will never find its way into the courtroom. Judicial decrees and legislative initiatives will not determine the outcome of this battle. For instead of an overt removal of monuments, the real battle for the Ten Commandments is taking place in the hearts and lives of Christians.

Often, we have heard reminders that the Ten Commandments are commandments, not suggestions. Yet too easily one or more of the Commandments is

ignored in everyday living, even by church people. Several years ago, a popular Christian magazine published a cartoon of the church sign. The sign proclaimed boldly for all to read, "We teach eight commandments; your choice." Sadly, what was meant to be funny is all too real in the way some churches teach and some Christians practice.

Recent polls indicate the divorce rate among evangelical Christians is similar to or slightly higher than the divorce rate among other demographic segments. Is not this evidence that many in the Christian community have removed at least one commandment from their creed? Examples of "acceptable" violations of other commandments could be given as well.

True, Christianity is not a set of rules; Christianity is a person—Jesus Christ. Yet Jesus taught that those who follow Him will subscribe to and practice certain fundamental principles, thus demonstrating their faith.

This is not a call to legalistic observances. Nor should this be construed as an attempt to encourage the making of rules in an attempt to enforce Christian living. Others have tried and failed in those areas. Instead, let this challenge every reader to investigate the Scriptures and measure his or her lifestyle in the light of the Word of God.

The time for Christians to make a difference is now. A tragic Old Testament narrative tells of Hilkiah the high priest saying to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." The story is tragic, not because they found the book, but because it had been lost. How tragic it will be if our generation loses God's law. How much more tragic it will be if the Church is responsible for this loss. ■

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# The Business of Snatching Minds

by Wilfred Hahn

Anyone who works in the business world is familiar with the current marketing jargon. Advertisers talk of market share. For example, Coca-Cola, the world's largest beverage company, sometimes calculates its sales in terms of share of the total of all the liquids consumed by the entire world's population. On this basis, they figure that only a small percentage of all liquids drunk by humans is a Coca-Cola product. Conclusion? The sky is the limit if everyone can be expected to drink only Coca-Cola beverages.

Marketing strategists extend this concept to other measurements—for example “share of wallet.” But the most far-reaching concept in terms of endtime spiritual phenomena is the concept of “share of mind.” Not only do leading marketing professionals use this concept to great effect, we can be sure that Satan has also mastered this technique. The proof? The “share of mind” that God's truth gets in our time—specifically also in so-called “Christian” nations—is probably at an all-time low. In fact, the “share of mind” trend that we are discussing here is actually prophesied to occur in the last days. The sad reality is that very few people will ever be conscious of this grave development. Truth and vital facts of eternal significance are being crowded out of the mind by the siren lures of trivia that capture most people's attention today.

Why is the mind such an important aspect of Satan's endtime strategies? And, sadly, why has this strategy been so successful?

## *Why the Mind Is an Endtime Target*

The human mind is a strategic focus in the cosmic battle for at least three important reasons: First, our faith involves the mind: “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD” (Isaiah 1:18). Faith, belief, and obedience are connected to reasoning. As the Apostle Paul admonished, we are urged to use our minds—not to put our brains on the shelf: “I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind” (1 Cor. 14:15). In contrast, the cults try to immobilize, disable, and circumvent the natural safeguard of the mind. That is not so with God. It is true that our minds are not able to fully capture His greatness and His ways. But that doesn't mean we don't accept logic and reason to support our beliefs.

Next, our mind is a spiritual battleground. Whatever thoughts gain access—whether through our eyes, ears, or spirits—it is in the mind that they impact our hearts and souls. In fact, what the Bible calls the “heart” is, in essence, what our minds choose to believe and pursue. Our thoughts represent reality and rank eternal importance just as much as our actions. Christ made this point very clear: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28). Here we see that the evil thoughts of the mind, if not repulsed, become actual sins of the heart whether there has been any physical consummation or not.

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

***In conclusion, we see the main reasons the human mind is the logical point of assault. It is the essence that exercises faith and chooses a relationship with God; it is the spiritual war zone; and lastly, through our physical brains, our minds can entrench behaviors and responses that we may have to strain to unlearn.***

Finally, the mind finds its interface in the brain, a fleshly organ that learns and adapts. This gray matter can become habituated to lifestyle, thought patterns, and thinking processes. Like an exercised muscle that becomes stronger, so the physical pathways of the brain can become trained and expert. To the extent that we have allowed our brains to train bad thoughts and behaviors, we need to undo them. The Apostle Paul referred to this as renewal: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

In conclusion, we see the main reasons the human mind is the logical point of assault. It is the essence that exercises faith and chooses a relationship with God; it is the spiritual war zone; and lastly, through our physical brains, our minds can entrench behaviors and responses that we may have to strain to unlearn.

### ***Jamming the Radar of the Human Mind***

Without question, the mind of modern-day mankind is under assault. The attacks and incursions are increasing and coordinated as perhaps never before. Moreover, a global communications machinery is rapidly taking form that plays a pivotal role in enabling the Antichrist and the beast to deceive the world. Let’s review just a few of the developments in this area that have been sweeping America and the world in recent decades.

**1. Media Concentration:** Today, less than 10 firms—all of them global

giants—dominate world media whether radio, television broadcasting, cable, print or the internet. They include world-spanning companies such as Sony, News Corporation, Time Warner, Viacom, Disney, Bertelsmann and others. By some estimates less than 50 companies control the world’s media. It is difficult to keep up to date with this fast-moving group. This industry is always changing as media takeover and acquisition activity remains high around the globe. A recent survey of media and financial executives reported a strong desire to continue acquiring media properties.<sup>1</sup> Rupert Murdoch, now arguably the world’s most powerful media mogul who built News Corporation, famously predicted earlier this year that the world would have only three large media companies in three years.<sup>2</sup> He might be right.

What are these firms doing? They are building and consolidating distribution channels to the entryways of the mind—the eyes and ears of mankind. We can see that a massive and unified information machinery has taken form around the world. Of course, this would be good if they were all disseminating the Gospel to the four corners of the world; however, as is well known, media owners and their professional staffs are largely dominated by secular humanist thought. Mostly, the messages carried by the media are being determined by consumer wants and the demands of corporate profitability. All of the large global media firms are public companies that must satisfy their shareholders. High share prices and dividends, not purity and high morals, are what matters to this constituency. In one way or another, the interests of commerce drive the message. As the head of Westinghouse

***Another study that measured the hours spent upon television, cable networks, internet, recorded music and movie theatres in 2002 concluded that media consumption of these categories rose 30 percent since 1977.<sup>5</sup> Most of the time that people are spending on media consumption is concerned more with entertainment than musing (thinking).***

(which at the time owned CBS, the television network) once put it, “We are here to serve advertisers. That is our *raison d’etre*.”<sup>3</sup>

This global concentration trend has great significance for the world today for a number of reasons. In keeping with the theme of this article, we can at least conclude that this development is playing a key role in a “mind jamming” strategy of the human mind during these last days. Clearly, it is not accidental that this process has played out over such a short period, having largely occurred in accelerated fashion since the early 1980s. Recently, media concentration has been a top news story in the US as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has been contemplating new ownership rules that will further open the doors to yet more concentration. At a recent congressional hearing in opposition to the FCC’s proposal, John McCain, who was worried about the possible effects of continuing concentration, commented, “At some point, you’ll have many voices—and one ventriloquist.” Though he may not have known it, his words line up with prophecy. Indeed, there is only one ventriloquist behind the world’s systems. And increasingly, this voice—Satan’s—is becoming louder, shriller, more coordinated and pervasive than ever before. Already, he has been behind the popular values and humanist philosophies of mass media today.

**2. Amusement and Entertainment:** Just how much media does the average person consume in North America? According to a number of surveys, the average person is increasing his watching and listening to the media. One survey conducted in 2001<sup>4</sup> reported the average North American was

exposed to 3,491 hours of media output in 2000. Moreover, this amount was expected to continue to grow in the future. If one assumes that the average person sleeps eight hours each day, this staggering statistic suggests that as much as two-thirds of a person’s waking hours is being jammed with “share of mind” products. Another study that measured the hours spent upon television, cable networks, internet, recorded music and movie theatres in 2002 concluded that media consumption of these categories rose 30 percent since 1977.<sup>5</sup> Most of the time that people are spending on media consumption is concerned more with entertainment than musing (thinking). Of course, some wholesome entertainment can be valuable. But with so much entertainment, most of it featuring questionable content, what room is there for applying our minds to the important things in life: worshipping God and studying Scripture?

**3. News and Information Content:** We all rely on information as we form opinions and decide matters of truth. But opinions and truth depend on the source of information. According to a 2003 survey,<sup>6</sup> the vast majority of people rely upon the mass media for their news information—the same large media behemoths mentioned earlier. Eighty-three percent of Americans receive most of their news from the television, 42 percent from newspapers, 19 percent from radio, 15 percent from the internet and less than 5 percent from magazines. But much of what is identified as “popular” news programming today amounts to little more than entertainment. The newscasters tend to be aesthetically pleasing, with movie-star good looks and makeup. Much of the news content is pure trivia,

Hollywood output, and updates on the rich and famous. Real news that affects the hearts and souls of mankind—past, present, and future—receives scant mention. As well, balanced international news continues to shrink from the public domain even during these times of foreign anti-terrorism activities. What international news does catch the eye of mass media channels is either superficial or selected for its entertainment or propaganda value. Instant coverage, scripted dialogue and plots are even turning wars into gaming events.

The result is that the average person's mind is bombarded with entertaining images and populist messages. With that kind of informational diet, the mind loses its alertness, its ability to discern truth from fiction, and its ability to see and to recognize the signs of the times. "So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled" (1 Thess. 5:6, 7). Fewer and fewer people today have the ability to test and approve God's will and plans. Moreover, Jesus Christ counseled His followers to be alert and to watch. How many find the time and focus to do so today?

#### **4. Booming Advertising Exposure:**

It is estimated that the average American is subjected to approximately 3,000 advertising messages every day.<sup>7</sup> That figure does not include ads and messages that might be found on T-shirts, in newspapers, inside subways or on the sports apparel and equipment of Olympic athletes. As one writer puts it, "The entire system is saturated by a hyper-commercialism, a veritable commercial carpet-bombing of every aspect of human life."<sup>8</sup> Increasingly, advertisers try to link their products with "values." This advertising is so effective that a

simple logo eventually carries a sophisticated meaning. Youth culture is particularly adept at this type of sign language. By wearing a certain brand-name T-shirt, young people are demonstrating membership in a specific clique or identity with a certain worldview.

The culture of advertising is also a recent phenomenon. While advertising has been around since the dawn of time, it is only following World War II that the hyper-consumerist culture began in America. Advertising spending per person in the US since the late 1940s (measured in 1999 dollars) has risen 5 times.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, the cares of this world have become the focus of most people. Like the pagans, many allow their minds to become concerned with material things. Christ said that we shouldn't allow our minds to dwell on such matters: "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:31-33). Christ warned that in the last days we should "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap" (Luke 21:34).

We have surveyed only some of the major endtime avenues of assault upon our minds. We could also document the rise in the use of a host of mind-altering drugs—from anti-depressants to recreational and abusive substances. According to the World Health Organization, depression has become a global epidemic. We could also document the rise in false religions and cults that are snatching

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people's minds. This last phenomenon is expressly prophesied in Scripture. Many false Christs will come in the endtimes: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed" (Luke 21:8, 9). "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time" (Matt. 24:25). The claims of false Christs will take up the "share of mind" as never before. Indeed, this is happening today.

#### ***The Focus of Mind That the Bible Teaches***

What "share of mind" does our Lord encourage? The Bible leaves no doubt. Hundreds of verses in Scripture suggest Jesus Christ should possess our total being. Scripture leaves no doubt that God's truth and presence should dominate our minds. Perhaps the most quoted verse is found in Psalm 1: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1, 2). "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long" (Psalm 119:97).

Sadly, all of us living in the super-charged media and commercialized culture of our time struggle in attaining the type of devotion that Scripture teaches. The Apostle Paul was already worried about this type of assault upon the minds of Christians 2,000 years ago:

"But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from

your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). Paul may not have understood the "somehow," but today we do recognize the devices and means being employed to lead our minds astray.

What can we do? We can acknowledge this encouragement: "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2, 3). But in our time of a massive, coordinated assault upon the functioning of people's minds, more than acknowledgment is required. We must also willfully act to govern and guard our minds. The Bible provides much counsel on this task: "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy' " (1 Peter 1:13-16).

"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray" (1 Peter 4:7). ■

#### **ENDNOTES**

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# Redefining Church

by David L. Burkholder

Perhaps you have heard church members commenting about other members or those attending services with words such as these: "They just don't fit here; they should go to that more '\_\_\_\_\_' church down the street." Or, "So and so will certainly not be an asset to (y)our church!", or, "Just what do they think they are doing here?" Comments such as these imply a social stratification which welcomes some people into the church and shuts others out.

But is this the way it should be? Should the church be concerned with social or monetary status or organizational or work abilities? What defines the church? And who is welcome? And what does it take to get in? In a day when, sadly, some of these elements do come into play, perhaps it is appropriate to review some of these basic questions.

The church is defined in the Scriptures as the body of Christ. It is made up of a variety of individuals from *all* walks of life, those who have embraced Christ as Saviour and Lord. The Apostle Paul puts it this way in Romans 12:5, "So we, *being many*, are *one body* in Christ, and every one members one of another." First Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 also give additional insights into the makeup and function of this body. It is a diverse group, but with a common purpose.

The church, it should be noted, is not made up of perfect people, but of broken people striving for perfection through Christ. Now I am not a big fan of advice columnist "Dear Abby," and often disagree with the advice she gives to correspondents, but once, at least, she hit it right when she said, "The church is not a museum for saints, but a hospital for sinners." Amen. This speaks to the fundamental purpose of the church as being a place where broken, hurting individuals

come seeking healing, comfort, support, and redirection for their lives. The church is not to be a showplace for those having reached a certain level of spiritual achievement or maturity, but a place where individuals can grow into Christ-likeness. There is to be room for all and a function for all, each contributing to the welfare of the whole. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:15 and 16 concerning this where he said: "Speaking the truth in love, and growing up into him in all things who is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:15, 16).

Did you notice the inclusiveness of that passage? It speaks of the *whole* body, *every* joint, the working together of *every* member to the edifying, or building up, of itself. The rest of that chapter, and the two that follow, expand on the personal disciplines necessary to provide a harmonious working environment within the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul expounds further on the theme of brotherhood equality in 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free," and in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

Certainly Paul does not mean that all distinctions of race and culture are simply erased when one becomes a Christian. What he does mean is that such distinctions are superseded by the overriding concept of brotherhood. The church is a brotherhood where there is to be equality and mutual concern one for the other. All

have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. All stand on equal footing before Him. Each carries responsibility for the other. And each member exercises his gifts and abilities for the building up of the entire body. Personal ambition is subordinated to the welfare of the group.

Jesus made it clear that He came to provide salvation for all men—worldwide, regardless of class, race, or any other separating distinctions. In Luke 19:10 Jesus said, speaking of Himself, that “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” In other places He emphasized that He came, not for the sake of the righteous, but on behalf of sinners. The Apostle Paul reiterated Jesus’ statement in giving his personal testimony to Timothy: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15). Since sin is a universal blight upon all mankind, salvation, too, is offered to all. No one is excluded from the invitation to find new life in Christ.

Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16, “I will build my church.” Since Jesus provides salvation which is the key to entrance into His church, and since salvation is offered to all men, it stands to reason that the church of Jesus Christ will be made up of individuals from all nationalities and all walks of life. Someone has said that “the ground at the foot of the cross is the most level spot on earth.” We all stand in equality before Him who saved us. And it is in that leveling that all distinctions of nationality, race, social status, and position are obliterated, making us “one in Christ Jesus.”

So, is the church an exclusive institution, welcoming some and barring others? Yes and no. Yes, because there are strict entrance requirements. Only those who have confessed and repented of their sin, and been born again by the blood of Jesus Christ are eligible for membership. No, because those entrance requirements are open to “whosoever will” regardless of

race, nationality, social, or financial status—or any other distinguishing characteristics.

To get a picture of how God builds unity and harmony out of a diverse group of people, one needs only to look at Jesus’ disciples. The twelve that Jesus chose to “be with him” (Mark 3:14), were a diverse group indeed. There were rough fishermen, a hated tax collector, a nationalistic zealot, a doubter, and a thief. Two were called “The sons of thunder” for their fiery dispositions and one eventually betrayed Jesus. Why did He choose such a diverse group? Why not just twelve mild-mannered, significantly righteous men?

Several reasons emerge. Jesus saw in each of these men certain potential for the advancement of His kingdom. And just perhaps He wanted to show succeeding generations of the church what could be accomplished by such a diverse group of individuals committed to an exclusive cause. Were they perfect? Certainly not. One needs only to read the gospel accounts to determine that. But did they accomplish the task for which Jesus chose and commissioned them? With the exception of one, the answer is a resounding “yes.” Just a look at the worldwide church today gives one a picture of the success of their mission to carry the gospel to the whole world.

This should teach us that whoever God has saved and sanctified we dare not declare unacceptable. All men carry potential in His sight and we must train ourselves to look beyond human distinctions and classifications to also see and embrace that potential for the growth of His body, the church. As Erdman points out in commenting on Jesus’ choice of disciples, “We should never be surprised to find among the followers of Christ men of the most varied character. He can use them all, and He transforms them all, if only they will yield themselves wholly to His enabling power.”

We may need to be reminded at times that we do not set the requirements for

entry into the body of Christ. Yes, it is true that human leadership from within that body has a God-given responsibility to maintain the spiritual purity and integrity of the body. But that responsibility does not extend to social distinctions. Whoever Christ accepts, we must accept. And the church should be large enough, and “big” enough, to provide whatever care necessary to encourage and help those who have needs or who do not seem to “fit in” for various reasons.

The church of Jesus Christ is structured and equipped to provide the necessary spiritual, social, and intellectual growth and development needed by her members. Just look at Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 12:4-13, and the whole of 1 Corinthians 12, especially verses 4-7.

Different individuals are equipped and commissioned to meet the needs of others within the body. And through this mutual nurturing exercise of love and commitment, the body experiences growth and development—and the obliterating of lines of distinction as observed in society.

So, let’s be careful to avoid negative attitudes toward fellow believers. Let’s be careful not to shut anyone out of Christ’s body. Instead, let’s be sure to exercise our God-given abilities and gifts to build one another up and to encourage one another along the road to Christlikeness. Our destination is the same. Let’s be sure not to hinder others striving for heaven by relegating them to a lesser position than that which Christ accepts for members of His body. ■

## **Engaging the Culture With the Mind and Heart of Christ**

by Dr. William Brown

*Editor’s Note: The following article is an edited version of a chapel message by Dr. Bill Brown, president of Cedarville University.*

Harry Potter, Britney Spears, Michael Moore, Howard Stern—all are major influences of our culture’s values and behavior. Should Christians ignore them, enjoy them, or engage them? From the biblical perspective, the challenge to engage is clear. We are called, after all, to be salt and light *in the world*. The time has come for us to be serious about engaging the world with the heart and mind of Christ. Christians ought to confront the world around them and give an answer for the hope that is within them (1 Peter 3:15).

So, how do we go about it? For now, let’s focus on American pop culture: the part of our society that influences the most people. In America, the entertainment industry is said to be both our

largest industry and our largest export. Everywhere, our entertainment is the world’s entertainment. Christians have always struggled with how and how much to interface with movies, television, music, and, now, the Internet. Let’s look at a biblical rationale for why it’s crucial to reorient how we look at the world and culture around us.

From a worldview perspective, we must remember that every book, every song, and every film has at its roots a worldview. These media are telling us to believe certain truths about the world, to adopt certain values, and to allow certain behaviors. As thinking Christians, we must look beyond the facade, see what most people cannot see, and uncover what is there.

The Apostle Paul reminds us to “test everything” (1 Thess. 5:21). We cannot let anything go by us (or into our minds and hearts) without discerning its meaning and purpose.

Historically, Christians have confronted culture in one of three ways. The first is to respond to our gut level *disgust* at culture and therefore *withdraw* from it.

We are offended when we see something that is immoral, vile, or blasphemous. As a result, we pull away and form our own subculture so we don’t have to interact with those outside. In fact, for many Christians, that has been the way they’ve been taught to respond. They’ve been instructed by well-meaning people to disengage. They don’t even want to think about those things that might be antagonistic to the Truth or to our Saviour. “Stay away from it!” is the battle cry.

Admittedly, there are a lot of things that are very, very offensive. For example, the Internet is choked with offensive Web sites. One such site (which I will not identify) is visited by thousands every day. It instructs on how to commit suicide. There are many Web sites giving honor to the memory of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the Columbine killers. One particular site calls these young men “our heroes.” Why? Because they lived what they believed and paid the ultimate price for their principles.

Offensiveness is not limited to the Internet, of course. Television programs such as “South Park” have elevated offensiveness to an art form by regularly portraying Jesus Christ in a despicable manner.

It is easy to find Howard Stern offensive, Michael Moore distasteful, and Marilyn Manson disgusting. We could go on and on and on.

Much of what passes for entertainment these days is nothing short of moral and cultural degradation. But simply withdrawing and creating our own subculture is not a biblical response. Remember, we are called to be salt and light *in the world*. Please do not misunderstand me. If you think I am saying it is okay to watch every

movie or listen to every song, then you are falling into the trap of many Christians who take the next approach to culture.

The second approach begins by being *delighted* by culture. Many Christians, particularly young ones, do just that. They see the glam and the glitter of what’s going on in the entertainment world and are enamored by it. As a result, they *assimilate* to the prevailing culture. They become just like the world around them. There is no distinguishable difference between the behavior, values, and vision of the Christian and those of the non-Christian world.

Consider that one of the top selling music artists to teenage Christians today is said to be Eminem. Christian kids buying Eminem? You better believe it. As thinking Christians, as a people who want to engage the culture, the first question we have to ask is: Why? What is it about Marshall Mathers (Eminem) and his work that resonates in the hearts of young Christians today? With all that he says, with all that he believes, with all of his actions that are so antagonistic to truth and to our faith, why is it that Christian young people like him so much? In one way or another we’ve got to answer that question. Part of the answer is that these young people have assimilated into the worldview of the culture around them.

But it is not just teens and their entertainment that fall prey to assimilation. Christian adults have also bought into the secular mindset of the prevailing culture. How often do we measure ministry success by dollars or numbers? How often do we determine God’s blessings by health and wealth? Indeed, these may be signs of favor and effectiveness, but frequently the motives and methods make God an afterthought. Assimilation is deadly because we see it in others but fail to recognize it in ourselves.

The third approach to culture is the one I believe to be the biblical approach. It avoids the inadequacies of withdrawing or assimilating. When confronting the cul-

ture, we should be *distressed* by what is happening to the point that we are motivated to *engage* it with the heart and mind of Jesus Christ.

By distressed, I mean that our hearts ache for the world around us. For example, when I read about Eminem, when I try to look into his mind, my heart breaks for him. In fact, there are a number of current artists, some just as offensive as he is, that I pray for every day. I pray that somehow Eminem will come to Jesus Christ. I have heard there are some Christians praying that he will die and go to hell. But I want him to know the gift of God. I am distressed by what he and others advocate because I recognize that it is the condition of their hearts and the worldview they have adopted that results in their messages of despair and destructiveness.

Take the example of Lot. He was certainly no paragon of virtue, but Peter describes him as “a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)” (2 Peter 2:7, 8). Are we distressed by all that we see and hear in the culture around us? Are we tormented in our souls by the world of despair? If we are, then the only response is to engage it with the truth of Christ through our acts of love and our explanation of the truth (Matt. 5:14-16; Col. 4:4-6).

The most poignant example of this truth in action is seen in the Apostle Paul. He claims, “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible” (1 Cor. 9:19). Think about that just for a moment. Paul says he has been set free and now makes himself a slave to everyone. A slave? To everyone? For what reason? “To win as many as possible.” He elaborates further when he writes, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:22).

Paul is saying, “I want to know what it is that makes you tick so that I can build

a bridge to Jesus Christ for you. I want to know what it is that stirs your soul, that stirs your emotions, that gives you meaning and significance in life. All the questions you have about life that you think are being answered by Eminem or by Britney Spears . . . those answers are only found in Jesus Christ. You think they are elsewhere, so I want to understand why so that I can build that bridge to you.”

Do you see the difference? I enslave myself to others. That doesn’t mean that I become just like them or adopt their values, but it does mean that I try to know what is going on inside of them because I know that whatever needs they have, the provision is Christ.

What we’ve done for too long as the church is to say to the world, “We want you to enslave yourselves to us. We want you to think like us, have our views, become like us.” We’ve asked an unbelieving world to enslave themselves to our way of life and our views when Paul’s example is to say, “It’s not about me, it’s about them . . . and it’s about Him.”

Paul did more than write about engaging the culture; he practiced it. We see one example in Acts 17. Paul had left Silas and Timothy in Berea and traveled to Athens. Athens, at that time, was still the gem of the Western world. Politically, philosophically, and economically, everything came through Athens.

While Paul was there waiting for Silas and Timothy, he became “greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols” (Acts 17:16). There is that word *distressed* again. In the Greek, the term translated “greatly distressed” is one word, the word from which we get *paroxysm*. The term refers to an intense internal, emotional anxiety. Paul’s confrontation with the idolatrous society of Athens caused him deep inner turmoil.

Like America today, the city of Athens was literally a marketplace of worldviews. Most large cities of the time possessed a huge marketplace—the agora—where local commerce took place. Athens had two of

them. The ancient Greek marketplace was overflowing with altars, statues, and small temples dedicated to every imaginable deity. In fact, it was so jammed with idols that when the Romans conquered Athens they had to build another agora to carry out normal marketplace activities.

The idols weren't just fat little Buddhas sitting on pedestals. Many of them were vile, immoral, and in some cases just downright pornographic. Paul walked into this and saw thousands of people worshipping. Was he offended? Probably. But more than anything else his heart was broken for them. He was distressed. How did he respond?

First, he went up to the synagogues as was his custom. There the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles would come, and Paul would preach the gospel. Then, he went to the marketplace and began to talk with anyone who would listen about Jesus Christ.

As a result, he was invited up to the Areopagus, which many people believe was Mars' Hill. The intellectual leaders of Athens wanted to hear firsthand what Paul was teaching. So, Paul stood before them (and probably a good number of people from the city) and said, "Men of Athens! I see that in every way . . . you are going to hell, everyone of you. Look at that stuff you worship!" Wait! That's not what he said!

Paul said, "Men of Athens! I see that in every way *you are very religious.*" Talk about putting a good spin on it! Paul went on to explain to them that he had "looked carefully at your objects of worship" (Acts 17:23). Paul studied the very idols that the people worshiped. He was trying to understand their culture and then uncover a point of contact with which to build a bridge to Christ. He found that point of contact when he came across the altar to the "unknown God."

So, first Paul sought to understand their culture (Acts 17:23). Then he started where they were (vv. 22, 23). He was positive about the truth he found (v. 22), and he knew and quoted their sources (vv. 23,

28). In fact, instead of starting with the Bible as he did in an earlier message to a predominately Jewish audience (Acts 13), Paul quotes from Epimenides and Aratus. Finally, Paul makes a clear presentation of the gospel (vv. 18, 30, 31).

Paul enters into the "great discussion" that all people must engage in. He places himself in a subordinate position to the prevailing culture in order to gain his audience. He was not arrogant or patronizing. He recognized that the Athenian culture was a reflection of the many worldviews of its inhabitants. Paul's motivation came from a broken and troubled heart. He engaged the Jews, the common people, and the intellectual elite to bring them to an understanding of the good news of God's grace through Jesus Christ.

Paul was thoroughly equipped for his work. His breadth of knowledge and depth of heart gave his ministry an effectiveness wherever he went.

Christians need to be able to think deeply and broadly. But we don't stop there. The heart of compassion that was the motivation for Paul's ministry is just as important. Without this heart—a heart that burns for those outside of Christ—we have not fulfilled our mission.

For too long we have looked at externals and excluded the very people who desperately need to see authentic lives and hear authoritative truth. In today's culture, the blue hairs are not the old ladies in the front pew but the 13-year-old boys in the back. The question is, Where would Jesus sit? (Probably both places!)

So when we think about Harry Potter, Eminem, and all the icons of popular culture, we have to recognize the influence they wield by the questions they raise and the answers they give. We should seek to leverage that influence in a way that demonstrates how the gospel answers those questions. The attitude of our hearts and the altitude of our minds give us the ability to be salt and light to a world that is so unsavory and dark. ■

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## Book Review . . .

***Building on the Gospel Foundation: The Mennonites of Franklin County, Pennsylvania and Washington County, Maryland, 1730-1970 (Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, No. 42)* by Edsel Burdge Jr. and Samuel L. Horst. 928 pages. Hardcover, \$49.99. Reviewed by Marcus Yoder.**

What makes a work of history, such as Edsel Burdge Jr. and Samuel L. Horst's *Building on the Gospel Foundation* (Herald Press, 2004), palatable to a reader? Why should anyone be interested in reading a localized history of a Mennonite community? Burdge and Horst do a masterful job to present the case that one should both read and grow from reading such a work. It is clear after reading the book that not only should people of the Cumberland Valley read this book, but it is helpful to all students of the Mennonite movement. The reason for this is that the story of the Cumberland Valley Mennonites so closely resembles the story of many other communities.

The narrative of *Building on the Gospel Foundation* traces the long-term effects of a faith community that is not only linked by faith, but also by genes and geography. The author's thesis that a focus on the past will show us why a faith community is at the place they are today is well documented and viable. It is true that people change with time and technology, but as the authors show, the relating patterns in congregational life in this area are very similar to what they were one hundred years ago. The argument is well supported by many stories from the studied time period of 1730 to 1970 that show the churches of Cumberland Valley coming back to the same basic core issues; issues such as nonresistance, nonconformity and to what degree separation should be practiced.

Burdge and Horst begin the work with a good review of the mainline Anabaptist movement. With works such as this and John L. Ruth's *The Earth is the Lord's*, one is able to get a general overview of Anabaptism before the movements become localized. This is beneficial because it serves to connect local communities, such as Cumberland Valley, with the larger movement of Anabaptism—a necessary link in a work of history of this size.

The focus of the book is the Mennonites of Franklin County, Pennsylvania, and Washington County, Maryland, from 1730 to 1970. This area is strategically placed between the larger Mennonite settlements of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and the Shenandoah Valley settlements in Virginia. The movements and growth of this community mirror many of the movements in other Mennonite areas as one examines them. Burdge and Horst do well in making connections with the broader Mennonite circles throughout the book.

War has a drastic effect on all people but can be particularly difficult for those who are nonresistant. One of the strengths of this book is its focus on the impact of war on the Mennonite churches in the Cumberland Valley. For example, of particular interest is the effect of the Letterkenny army depot that was put into the center of the Mennonite area in the early 1940s. This ammunition supply depot directly impacted the Mennonites because the government took 21,000 acres by eminent domain to build their facilities. As Samuel Funk observed, it was "a very emotional upheaval for many" as homes, businesses and even meeting houses (the Strasburg meeting house had to be abandoned) were taken by the government, often on very short notice. This upheaval and the response of the Mennonites was a powerful testimony to their nonresistant spirit as they paid the price for the war.

The Civil War also affected the Mennonites of this area a great deal due in large part to geography. The proximity of battles and the fact that Maryland was in the Confederacy and Pennsylvania was a Union State resulted in upheaval for the Mennonite community. Franklin County, Pennsylvania, became a stationing and supply depot for the Union army. There were also a large number of refugees that streamed across the Mason-Dixon line that separated Maryland and Pennsylvania. Among these refugees from the south were some from the Shenandoah Valley Mennonites of Virginia. The battles of Antietam, Gettysburg, Jeb Stuart's invasion of Pennsylvania, and the sacking of Chambersburg all affected the Mennonites of this area. All in all this was probably the war that touched these Mennonites more than any other. The authors do a good job of painting the picture of what life was like in this era. Without a doubt, the Civil War had a significant impact on these people's lives.

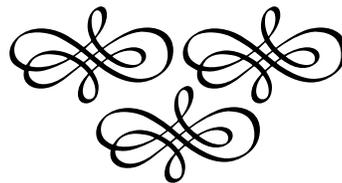
One issue that the authors deal very honestly with in the book is the struggle between the conservative and progressive branches in the Mennonite church. This is an age-old issue that still plagues the church today. One of the unfortunate things that is so often true and can be seen in this narrative is that on both sides of the issue people began to build forts and fight it out rather than engage in constructive dialogue that could help the church grow. It is imperative as we look at history to see that much of what we fight about on this issue is relational and not practical. The authors are very honest in revealing that all did not go well all of the time. Church problems, splits, et cetera are documented as well as the good times. This openness makes the narrative much more authentic than if the focus would only be on the positive side of things.

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The most significant strength of this book is its attention to detail. It is well documented and focused on the area and people. As with any work of history, the book deals with real people in real times. The authors do a good job weaving anecdotes into the history to keep the reader's interest. There is a massive amount of research material available through both the narrative and the notes. It is beneficial for the reader to keep one hand in the back and read the notes as well.

The most obvious criticism I have of the book is its size. The number of pages alone will scare some people away from reading the book. The attention to detail is sometimes a bit tedious and the reader can have a tendency to want to get to the next story. In consideration of that fact, the book is laid out in such a way that allows one to pick and choose portions and still get a good overview of what is happening.

This book is a good tool and is highly recommended along with Ruth's *The Earth Is the Lord's*, for any serious reader's bookshelf. It is honest and detailed, yet storied enough that it is enjoyable to read. In fact, if we as Anabaptists are to continue as a viable movement we must invest more time in studying where we are from and this book is a recommended tool to help do so. This book could be looked at as one "chapter" in the Mennonite story in the Americas. One hopes that many other "chapters" will be highlighted in the near future. ■



**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

# Doctor Luke

by Henry M. Morris  
Founder and President Emeritus of ICR

Luke—the author of the third Gospel and the Book of Acts—is of special interest for several reasons. He was the only Gentile who wrote any of the books of the Bible. Furthermore, he was the only scientist among the writers.

He is also recognized as a great historian, with his excellent accounts of the key events of the most important era in the history of the world. He also was undoubtedly a devoted Christian, a truth especially demonstrated by his unselfish service and companionship to the Apostle Paul. Finally, he was probably the first Christian apologist, zealously concerned to defend and establish the absolute truth of the gospel of Christ.

## *Luke as Scientist and Medical Doctor*

We know nothing for certain about Luke's background or his medical training. He was called "*the beloved physician*" by Paul (Col. 4:14), and undoubtedly one reason for his ongoing association with Paul was the latter's need for frequent medical care.

Paul spoke of his "*thorn in the flesh*," (2 Cor. 12:7), for example, and his "*infirmities*" (2 Cor. 12:9). We don't know what these were, although they affected him "*in the flesh*," and thus presumably needed a doctor's care from time to time. Paul had also suffered much actual physical persecution during his ministry (see 2 Cor. 11:23-27), and undoubtedly needed Luke's medical help on many occasions. We can assume that Dr. Luke could have built up a comfortable practice in such a city as Antioch (where he probably

met Paul), but he chose instead to serve the Lord in this sacrificial and much-needed capacity of helping Paul. As a scientist, it is interesting to me that the only one of Paul's followers who stayed with him to the end was also a scientist (2 Tim. 3:11).

Our Institute for Creation Research is happy to have many medical doctors as part of our own ICR team. The *Impact* article for April 2002, "The ICR Scientists" lists seventy-four scientists associated with the ICR ministries, of whom no less than five have M.D. degrees and are professional physicians. In addition, five M.D.s are serving on our ICR Board of Trustees. All of these men are solid Christian creationists and have strong scientific and medical credentials.

As far as Luke's two Bible books are concerned, there is little in either book that utilizes scientific or medical facts or principles. He does refer to the infant Jesus being circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21), and he is the only one of the four Gospel writers who does.

Luke alone of the Gospel writers noted the reliability of the created kinds ("*every tree is known by his own fruit*" Luke 6:44). Some commentators have noted the ironical relation between Mark 5:26 and Luke 8:43. Mark had said that a certain woman needing healing "*had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.*" Luke, perhaps trying to defend his professional colleagues, merely said that this same woman "*had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be*

*healed of any.*" That is, they had done their best, but it was an incurable disease.

As an historian, Luke was highly scientific in the way he compiled the data for his Gospel and his book of Acts. For many sections of Acts, of course, he was simply recording carefully what he saw and heard, as a scientist should. He had not been present at the events described in his Gospel, so had not acquired the data directly as had Matthew and John (Mark also, partly through Peter). But as he said in his opening passage, he somehow "*had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*" (Luke 1:3).

This understanding was acquired in various ways. He evidently had devoted much time to interviewing those who "*from the beginning were eyewitnesses*" (Luke 1:2). Thus, for example, he was able to give the most thorough account of the events surrounding the human birth of the Lord Jesus, as well as the preceding birth of John the Baptist. He alone reported the beautiful account of the two disciples who met Jesus after His resurrection as they traveled home to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), as well as a number of other events recorded nowhere else.

At least twenty of Christ's parables are recorded in Luke—a number of which (e.g., the Good Samaritan, the prodigal son) are found only in Luke's gospel.

As far as his own eyewitness accounts in the Book of Acts are concerned, he has achieved the reputation of utmost accuracy. One of the most distinguished of all New Testament archaeologists, Sir William Ramsay, is said to have been converted partially through his surprised realization of the precise accuracy of Luke's depiction of conditions in the first century. In his epochal work, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (1915), Ramsay said:

"Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness" (p. 81). He added later: ". . . this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians" (p. 222).

In addition to Luke's scientific devotion to accuracy in reporting, not only of the events of which he was an eyewitness, but also of what he learned from others about the life of Christ, there is one other vital factor. When he claimed to have "*had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*" (Luke 1:3), he may well have been thinking of God's inspiration of his writings. The phrase "*from the very first*" could also be translated "*from above.*" It is so translated in John 3:31, for example: "*He that cometh from above is above all.*"

If this phrase is so rendered, it would explain where Luke got his information regarding some events. Of course, all Scripture is divinely inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), even when the basic information was acquired by research.

### ***Luke and Apologetics***

Luke's writings are of special interest to me, not only because of his scientific accuracy in reporting but also because of his desire to defend the gospel and give evidence for its truth. In fact, most commentators on Luke's Gospel and especially his book of Acts agree that one important purpose was, indeed, that of apologetics. However, their main reason for understanding Acts this way is usually because of Luke's repeated emphasis on the legitimacy of Christianity as far as Rome was concerned, noting that practically all the initial opposition and persecution had been fomented by the Jewish leaders. The attempted defenses of Christ by Pilate and of Paul by Felix, Festus, Agrippa, etc., are recounted.

However, Luke's interest in apologetics is broader than that. For example, he

begins his two-book narrative with the most in-depth account of Christ's incarnation and birth to be found anywhere. Then he begins his book of Acts by noting that there had been "*many infallible proofs*" (Acts 1:3) of Christ's resurrection. This is followed by the supernatural events on the day of Pentecost, and then many miracles performed by the apostles as they began preaching the gospel, continually stressing the great truth of His resurrection. There was also much rehearsing of the evidence of fulfilled Messianic prophecy. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit is also evident through much of Luke's record in Acts. Although the Book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest in Rome, he is still free to preach the gospel to anyone who will listen, especially to the Gentiles.

Finally, the Book of Acts closes with the testimony that, despite his nominal status as a Roman prisoner, Paul spent "*two whole years*" free to preach to all who came to hear, "*teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him*" (Acts 28:30, 31).

#### **Luke and Creation**

In concluding this very brief survey of the writings of Dr. Luke, it is good to remember that he was a creationist and delighted in reporting Paul's references to God as Creator. When the chief priests and elders first commanded the apostles "*not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus*" (Acts 4:18) they simply prayed, beginning their prayers by saying: "*Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is*" (Acts 4:24). Then they prayed to God "*that with all boldness they may speak thy word*" (Acts 4:29), and great numbers were won to Christ.

Soon came the conversion of Paul and the beginning of his missionary journeys. As he went to different cities,

he normally preached first to the Jews there, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was their Messiah, that He had died for their sins and been raised from the dead.

When he preached to pagan Gentiles, however, they knew nothing of the Scriptures or the promised Messiah, so Luke tells how Paul began with the creation, then proceeded to the resurrection, then to the gospel. At Lystra, for example, he urged the pagans there to turn from their idols "*unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein*" (Acts 14:15).

Eventually Paul came to Athens, the very center of pagan culture, particularly encountering Epicurean and Stoic philosophers there, both systems espousing a form of evolution. Here is the gist of what he preached to them, according to Luke: "*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven, and earth . . . giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. . . . He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*" (Acts 17:24-26, 31).

Doctor Luke was surely a great man specially called of God—a scientist, physician, historian, brilliant writer, inspired writer, Christian apologist, and Biblical creationist! Thank God for his unique ministry. ■

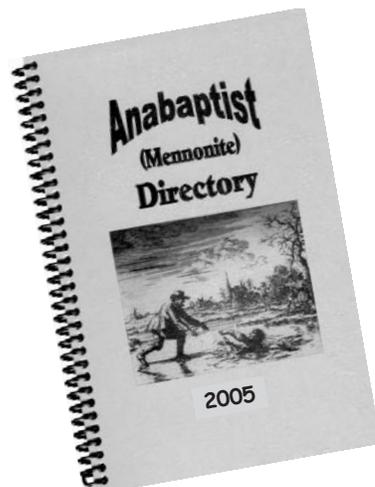
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