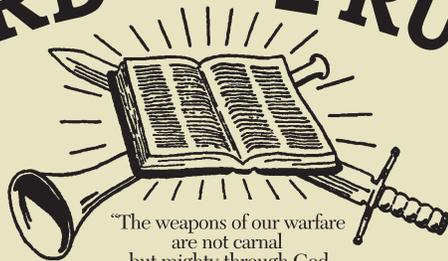


The SWORD and TRUMPET

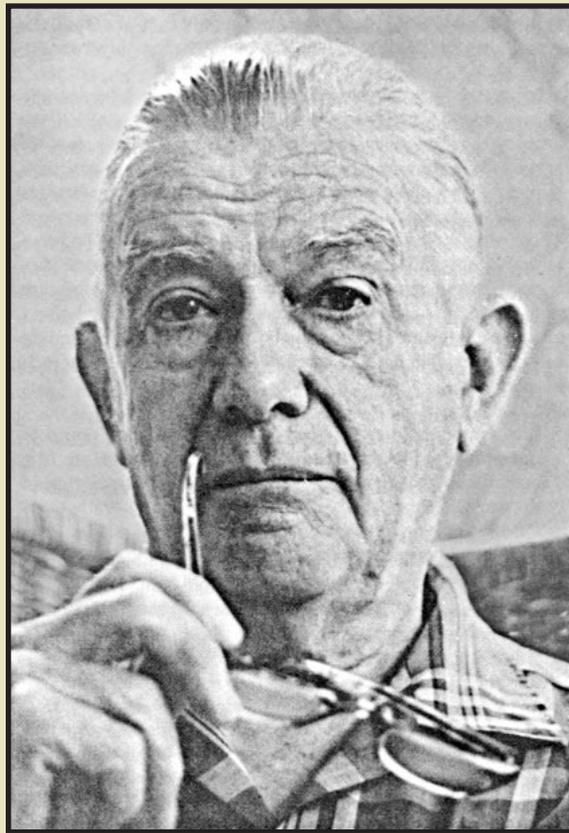


"Blow ye
the Trumpet
and warn
the People."

"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



PAUL WILSON BRAND

MAY 2005

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Person of the Month:

Paul Wilson Brand (1914-2003)

Paul Wilson Brand was born to missionary parents, Jesse and Evelyn Brand, in the mountains of southwest India in 1914.

Paul grew up in a world of tigers and snakes. His father taught him to appreciate the beauty and wonder of God's creation with which he was surrounded. For the first few years of his schooling Paul would sit in the branch of a large tamarind tree while he did his studies. Then he would drop the assignments down to his mother once they were finished. When Paul was nine years of age his parents then sent him to London, England, for further education. Five years later, while still in England, Brother Brand received word that his father had died in India. Although his years with his father were few, Paul Brand learned a spirit of gratitude and trust in God from both his parents. They taught him, by example, that the love of Christ is shown to others on a one-to-one basis. His faith in Christ was due in large part to observing his parents' faith in action. From them he also learned to live a disciplined life of simplicity, which he later carried with him as he established his own home.

He had decided not to be a missionary like his father but rather to pursue life in India as a missionary carpenter and builder, but because of circumstances he ended up at London University pursuing medical and surgical training as an Orthopedic Surgeon. One year prior to entering medical school Brand enrolled in the Missionary Training Colony. During that time he grew spiritually as a result of the rigorous training in evangelism, simple living, and total dependence upon the Lord.

While in medical school he met his wife-to-be, Margaret, who was also studying to be a doctor. In 1946, when Paul was 32, he returned to India with his wife, Margaret, where he served as a surgeon, teacher, and director of the Christian Medical College Hospital in Vellore. In India the Brands came in contact with lepers and the Lord touched their hearts as to the plight of these outcasts. Paul and Margaret worked together to alleviate the suffering of these people and bring hope to their souls and dignity to their lives.

Four of the Brands' six children were born in India. Paul taught his children, as his father had taught him, to enjoy God's creation and explore His wonders. In spite of the dangers all around, all six children survived to adulthood! When it was time for the children to go to high school the Brands sent them off one by one to England to receive that training.

As a result of his burden for lepers Brother Brand established a hospital for them called Karigiri. Leprosy's advance in the body can be stopped by taking sulfone drugs but that does not solve the problem of loss of hands and feet, etc., associated with the disease. It had previously been thought that such deformities were caused by the leprosy bacillus. Dr. Brand did much painstaking research before he found their cause. Brand proved that the bacillus attacked the nerve tissue which resulted in the loss of the sensation of pain. Without pain, leprosy victims did not realize when they were injured or wounded and therefore did not take proper care of themselves to prevent infection, thus resulting in loss of body tissue. Now, with Brand's research results there was hope of prevention of tissue loss. This was a startling and profound medical discovery!

With this newfound medical breakthrough, Paul and Margaret went to work to bring real help to leprosy patients. Owing to techniques learned in orthopedic surgery

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Focus on the Holy Land

by Dr. Paul Chappell

Pastor, Lancaster Baptist Church, Lancaster, CA

(Preached April 14, 2002)

“I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8).

“And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings” (Daniel 7:24).

Recent Events Riveting

Since the end of World War II most Americans have felt a comfort, or a sense of protection, from any invasion from foreign powers on our soil. But suddenly, on September 11, America was awakened to the fact that we are not impregnable as a nation; our soil can be intruded upon; and our defense system, though strong, could not protect us from what took place on that day. Suddenly many of us were made aware that there are over one billion Muslims in this world, many of whom are very agitated, very angry and very much against not only Israel and America but any who would name the name of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

All of a sudden we received a wake-up call, one with graphic demonstration of the fact that we are living in a very angry and hostile world where, as the Bible predicts in Psalm 2, “the heathen are raging.”

In recent days Saddam Hussein offered twenty-five thousand dollars to any family whose child would offer himself in the Intifada in Palestine as a living bomb.

There is now in this world a rising population of over six billion people. By the year 2050 the number will rise to nine billion. Most of the three billion that will be

added to the population in the next fifty years will be in the countries of the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. And most will be raised in environments that are anti-America and anti-Israel.

Nightly the reports of hostility in Israel are coming forth from the news networks. The television and newspaper reports show us that people are growing more and more intolerant of the Middle East problems.

Return of Christ Cannot Be Predicted

Can someone look into the Bible and predict through these events the exact time of the return of Jesus Christ? No! No one knows the day nor the hour, says Matthew 25:13: “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” One of the signs by which we can know a false teacher or a cult leader is that he or she will begin to date the return of Christ.

I cannot say this morning when Jesus will return. I cannot say what the exact outcome of this latest crisis will be. But as we focus on the Holy Land and observe it day after day in the news, I believe it is safe to say that the focus on Jerusalem will remain, and pointedly so, until Jesus Christ comes back.

Christ’s Imminent Return

The return of Christ is imminent, meaning it could happen at any moment. The next great, unfolding event of interest to believers is Christ’s return—even though most believers are not living with that thought in mind. Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again” (John 14:2, 3). The idea of Jesus’ coming again is not a sectarian idea; it is a

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prophecy given to us by Christ Himself.

Furthermore, the Bible tells us that we are to be “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). The terms *God* and *Saviour* and *Jesus Christ* are synonymous in this Scripture. So, our great hope is the return of Jesus for His own.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Daniel’s Prophetic Vision

The Prophet Daniel lived some 550 years before the time of Christ. He was the recipient of several very important visions during the Babylonian world empire. Some would say Daniel’s message is obscure and not related to end-of-the-world-type prophecy; nevertheless, it does do exactly that. It speaks to the moment in which we live and to the days following this day, should the Lord tarry His coming.

Daniel’s vision focuses on the end times and is centered around the Mediterranean countries. Daniel is an apocalyptic book. In the apocalyptic books, God expresses His truth in symbols and hieroglyphics and uses various techniques dealing with world history and the unfolding of historical events to teach us His will for the ages.

In Daniel, Chapter 2, Daniel received the first great vision, a vision of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the day, the world ruler over Babylon. The Bible speaks of this picture of Nebuchadnezzar as representing four great world kingdoms. Daniel 2:42 tells us that the final world power of the Roman Empire, illustrated in the legs of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, would come again at a later time in the form of the ten toes of the vision. We will not take the time to study Daniel 2 in detail, but the part of that vision that is significant to this message is the ten toes of

the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, which represented a confederation of ten kingdoms that would grow out of the Roman Empire.

In Daniel, Chapter 7, the prophet saw four beasts rising from the Mediterranean Sea, each of which represented one of these four world kingdoms. Often in ancient times a beast was used on coinage or in hieroglyphics to show a particular kind of nation or world power. So, these four beasts are visible signatures, or pictures, of four world powers.

The first beast in Daniel 7 represented the world power of Daniel’s day, the ancient Babylonian Empire, which stretched from 606 to 538 B.C.—the time in which Daniel lived.

Incidentally, Daniel and others were brought from Jerusalem to the Babylonian Empire where they were living as captives during the time of the writing of this prophecy. The current Babylonian Empire, or the territory that was the headquarters of the Babylonian Empire, is now occupied and ruled by Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein views himself, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, as the power of the world and as an object for worship.

The second beast revealed here represented the world power known as the Medo-Persian Empire (dominant in the world from 538 to 336 B.C.) It was overthrown by Alexander the Great.

The third beast in Daniel’s vision was a leopard-type kingdom—the kingdom of Alexander the Great. This was the kingdom of Greece. Alexander ruled the world from 336 to 323 B.C.

The fourth great kingdom is represented in the legs of the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, or in the fourth beast of Daniel 7—the Roman Empire. This was the kingdom in power from 63 B.C. until A.D. 476. This was the world power when Jesus was on this earth. The Roman Empire, a great and mighty empire, covered the entire Mediterranean region. This is the empire that will have a revival in the last days. It is evident in the ten toes of Daniel 2 or the ten horns of Daniel 7.

These ten powers will be either a multinational rule of nations coming together in Europe, such as we see in the European Union (which came together officially in 2002); or it may be ten sections of world power globally, all coming under one flag or one particular power in a central location, as the European Union has come under a central governing body with headquarters in France.

We do not know when these ten toes or ten horns will come together as one. But what is significant today is that we see global politics changing so that the forming of a revived Roman Empire is now more understandable. Some would say it is even now a reality existing in the form of the European Union.

So, why the fuss; why such attention on the Holy Land? Here are three reasons:

I. THE REVIVAL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

I believe we are seeing a focus on the Holy Land because of the revival of the Roman Empire.

“These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth” (Daniel 7:17).

“Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings” (Daniel 7:23, 24).

The original vision is given in Daniel 7:1-7. It is in that vision where these four world empires are first mentioned in this chapter. But in verse 24 we see that from the final empire, the Roman Empire, there will come ten horns. Ten separate powers will emerge out of this Roman Empire. This Roman Empire will come again to the world scene by a confederation of ten nations.

Let me show you, for example, the current European Union (EU) to give you an idea of how it correlates to the first Roman

Empire. When you look at the Mediterranean Sea and notice not only Italy and Greece but all these countries that have come together in the European Union, it is immediately identifiable with the Roman Empire of the first four centuries. There are fifteen countries who have signed the charter. And as of January 1, they have a common currency and a common stock market. Many refer to it now as the United States of Europe. It is the only economy that is considered competitive with the economy of the United States of America.

It is a very powerful confederacy of nations. The *Los Angeles Times* reported (April 11) that the EU held meetings recently in Madrid to call for a pullback of Israeli troops in the current conflict. The EU is sending millions of dollars to Arafat and his Palestine organization. They are imposing trade sanctions against Israel. The European Union has a standing army of sixty thousand soldiers.

That is why many Bible scholars consider the European Union to be the revival of the once great Roman Empire. This revived Roman Empire, though it is not currently standing with ten member nations, is definitely a picture of what Daniel is speaking of with respect to the ten horns coming from the fourth beast. It is produced by a confederation of nations.

The Roman Empire is not only produced by a confederation of ten nations, but second, it precedes the advent of the Antichrist. The coming together of these nations is necessary because it is through this powerful coming together of nations that the Antichrist will begin his rise to power.

The Antichrist is not some science-fiction figure. In the Bible he is referred to as “that Wicked [one]” or “the beast.” We know that he will oppose Christ and he will at one point establish himself as the object of worship instead of Jesus Christ.

The Emergence of Antichrist

First, the Antichrist will come forward from the federation of nations or from the Mediterranean region.

“I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8).

This little horn, the Antichrist, comes up from the ten horns. In the process of his coming up—probably through great diplomatic prowess, manipulation, and maneuvering—he will overcome three of these kingdoms and establish himself as a powerful world figure, a power broker, a political person with great sway and influence.

The people of this union of nations are going to look to this figure as a man who has come to solve all their problems.

While he may come from a humble nation, humble origins, and at first seem like such a wonderful, lowly peace-giver, he will ultimately bring great havoc, pain, and destruction upon this earth.

Conquering World Kingdoms

Second, the Antichrist will subdue three kingdoms on his rise to power. We saw that in verse 8; we see it in the latter portion of verse 24: “. . . he shall subdue three kings.” He is, then, an expert in policy, skilled in diplomacy.

Some people might wonder, *How could that be the revived Roman Empire? There are fifteen nations represented at this point.* (So far, Britain has not aligned herself with the EU.) I believe the fact that three nations will be subdued is of interest because it shows us how quickly the number could be reduced.

All of us have seen how national boundaries have changed, have been realigned drastically in the last decade. Ten geopolitical regions or ten European powers coming together when God’s timing is right is not too hard to comprehend in this day.

After World War II, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg joined together to create one air force for collective self-defense. A coming together of world powers that goes from three to one

in an instant militarily illustrates that they could come together politically. The Antichrist at some point will subdue three of those nations on his ascent to power.

Exalted World Ruler

Third, the Antichrist will have great power over the nations. Some have indicated and are sure that he will assert himself through the United Nations. What role the UN plays, we do not know. It is an illustration, however, of the increased desire for a central global power. That power base does not have to be New York City. But wherever it is, it will be a place where the Antichrist will assert great influence.

The Antichrist will magnify himself. The Bible tells us that he speaks with “great words” (Daniel 7:11). Revelation 13:4 says, “And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?” The Antichrist, the Beast, is viewed as a great power that no one dare fight against.

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast” (Rev. 17:12, 13).

This confederation of nations will give power to the Beast. They will follow him. We do not know what he will accomplish or what feats he will broker in the realm of peace-giving, but whatever it is, he is going to have the attention of the ten regions of power spoken of here in Daniel 7.

The Bible tells us that at one point during the Tribulation period, he will have power to demand that every person on the earth receive a mark in his forehead or in his hand and that this mark will enable him to buy or sell (Rev. 13:16, 17).

Some have said, “How in the world would that be possible?” Those of us living in 2002 recognize that to place an infrared mark of some kind on someone’s hand or forehead or even implanting a little chip of

some kind that would be read by a scanner is certainly not unfathomable. Everyone in the world could receive such a mark, and the Bible says the world will receive that mark. That shows you how powerful his ideas are. In fact, there are many people in America today who are ready for such an implantation, and some are trying it experimentally in this hour.

Another indication of the power of the Antichrist is that he will demand to be worshiped (Rev. 13:15; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4). The world will accommodate him. This Antichrist who comes up through the ranks of these Mediterranean powers will have tremendous influence in the world and perhaps even today is garnering influence and making relationships in the world community.

A Treaty With Israel

Fourth, the Antichrist will confirm a treaty with Israel. One of the most significant, fascinating prophecies of the Bible that will take place at the very beginning of the Tribulation period is found in Daniel 9:26, 27: "After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off." The word for "week" means *heptad*, or a group of sevens. Each "week" spoken of represents seven years. There would be 69 weeks or, according to this, 483 years of Daniel's prophecy fulfilled when "Messiah shall be cut off" (Christ's crucifixion). These 69 weeks have passed.

When people talk about the seventieth week of Daniel, they're talking about events that remain for the future.

Once again, to get the historical context, from the time of the command to restore Jerusalem until the time that Jesus Christ rode on His triumphal entry into the city and was subsequently crucified was exactly 483 years.

When He was crucified, the concurrence of those weeks was suspended for a period of time which we would call the Church Age, the Age of Grace, the day in which we live. The seventieth week of Daniel will come when the Antichrist establishes his treaty with Israel. The final week of prophecy will unfold. It is called the Great Tribulation.

"He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [seven years]" (Dan. 9:27). In other words, the Antichrist will establish a covenant with Israel; "and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." In other words, at the three-and-a-half point of the seventieth week, Daniel says the Antichrist, the little horn, the Wicked One, will suspend his agreement with Israel. Great tribulation will follow in the last three-and-a-half-year time period.

The One-World Religion

Notice, then, finally, the Antichrist will make an agreement with the false, one-world church. Not only does he make agreements with the world powers governmentally and an agreement with Israel, but he is also going to make an agreement with a false, one-world church.

The fact is, right now there is a coming together of many denominations and of the religions of the world. Some people, especially the unsaved who do not have the Holy Spirit to enlighten them, think it's a wonderful coming together. But those of us who are guided by the Spirit of God and following the Word of God realize that you can't come together with all the world religions without throwing major portions of the Bible right out the window or without setting Christ down at a lower place than He should be.

The best passage to study to learn about the false church is Revelation 17, which depicts a latter-times church by referring to it as "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT." Mystery, Babylon the Great, will be a world religion that will incorporate all religions together under her skirts.

Perhaps that is why Revelation 17 refers to this church as the "great whore." She will prostitute herself in order to bring all the false churches together. There will be talk saying, "It doesn't matter what you believe. Whether you're a Hindu, a Muslim or a Christian, let's all come together under the mother church." This talk is being propagated today.

Jesse Jackson said in a speech two years ago that he dreamed for the day when Christians and Hindus and Muslims could gather together with Jews and all worship God together. The problem with that is, they are all worshipping a false god in that context. According to the Scriptures, “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

It’s interesting to see that the Antichrist will make an agreement with the false, one-world church.

“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Rev. 17:3).

The woman is the false church, and the Beast is the false government of the Antichrist.

John said that he saw this church seated on the Antichrist’s movement. There is a coming together, then, of religious and political power.

There is only one religion in the world that has an ambassador from the United States. I believe that particular church, the Roman Catholic Church, will be the vehicle to bring the other faiths together in the one-world church.

The fact is, this woman (the false church) will sit on the Beast (the Antichrist). That’s why when a friend sent me one of the Euro two-dollar pieces from the new European Union I was amazed to see the symbol that they chose to place on the coin—a woman riding a beast!

Some people will say, “Well, that’s a coincidence.” But it’s very intriguing to see the symbolism that is being used by the European community. It looks very much like they are coming together as a revived Roman Empire.

Why the focus on the Middle East? Because of the revival of the Roman Empire.

II. THE REJECTION OF ISRAEL

Israel is being rejected worldwide. Anti-Semitism is on the rise. Every night we

hear news from this little country, Israel, not larger than the state of New Jersey and which possesses one tenth of one percent of the world’s population, while China, with over 1.2 billion people in her population, is very rarely in the news.

Why is there such rejection of Israel? Why is there continued upheaval, though we have had meeting after meeting in attempts to effect peace agreements? Why do we continue to focus on this area?

First, the hatred of Israel revolves around the land of Palestine. The Jews have claimed this land as theirs since the days of the patriarchs. Deuteronomy 30:5 says that they will possess the land which their fathers possessed.

In 1993, celebrating the Oslo Agreement between the PLO and Israel (so named because of the secret negotiations outside Oslo throughout 1993), we read in *Time* magazine these words: “It’s as though the Creator is whistling up a new world.” People just couldn’t believe that Mr. Rabin and Chairman Arafat would come together with President Clinton. I’ll never forget the day of seeing Bill Clinton standing there and smiling from ear to ear because he had finally helped to bring “peace” to the region!

That peace accord has failed like all of the others because of the desire for the land. The Arabs fight against the Jews, and the Jews against the Arabs, for the land. The Bible prophesies that this will be the case until the return of Jesus Christ. Zechariah 12:3 says, “And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people.” Jerusalem will be the burdensome stone of the world community. Jerusalem will be the center of attention and the heavy burden that the world leaders will feel until Jesus Christ comes again.

The April 4 *Los Angeles Times* quoted Arafat, as he was speaking of Mr. Sharon: “Is it his homeland or mine? We have been here since our father, Abraham.” So both sides claim this land, and because of that, Israel is rejected by the Arab world—a tiny nation surrounded by a world that

hates it and would come quickly against it if they had any thought that they could have victory.

That is why there is such great concern about the nuclear forces being raised up by Saddam Hussein. Up until now, Israel alone has had nuclear power, the threat of which has been used to keep the Arab world at bay. But those days could be numbered now; so the focal point comes to Israel.

Not only because of the land do we see the rejection of Israel but, second, because of the lure of control. There are world powers today that are being drawn to the Middle East because they know if they could possess that land, they could control the oil supplies; they could control the economic supply of the entire world. That is why the prophecies of Ezekiel 38 and 39 are so significant. This is an overview of prophecy in this message.

“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army” (Ezekiel 38:14, 15).

“Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel” (Ezek. 39:1, 2).

So there is coming a time when these people of Meshech and Tubal, here referred to as the people of Gog, will come down upon Israel. A study of the words *Meshech* and *Tubal* will help us understand who these people are. *Meshech* is the word for the modern-day Moscow; *Tubal* is equivalent to the modern-day Tobolsk, a region in Russia. The Bible indicates that Russia will have hooks in her jaws bringing her down upon Israel.

Look on a map. Russia is directly to the north of Israel. The Bible says there will

come a time—I believe during the Tribulation—when Russia will rush down upon Israel. Russia’s economy is beginning to grow again, according to the April 10 issue of *USA Today*. Their economy grew by nine percent last year. Yet even as their economy grows, anti-Semitism continues to grow in Russia. There is a large Muslim presence there. They hate Israel and want to control Israel. There will come a time when they will indeed attempt to control Israel.

The land causes rejection, and the lure for power and control is causing many people to reject Israel today.

Why the focus on the Middle East? (1) Because of the revival of the Roman Empire from whence comes the Antichrist and (2) because of the rejection of Israel due to the land and the desire for power on the part of the surrounding nations.

III. THE RESTORATION OF WORLD ORDER

Someone says, “When will world peace ever come?” As Christians, we are not looking to the United Nations, to a peace treaty, to Mr. Sharon or Mr. Bush or any other world leader to bring peace into this world. We are “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.

Thank God, “when the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there”!

Our hope is in the coming of Jesus Christ. That’s why these prophetic events don’t bring depression or doom or gloom to us!

Someone says, “Will this world ever have order and peace again?” Yes, and it will happen at the second coming of Jesus Christ. He came the first time as a lowly Babe in the manger. He walked among us, lived a perfectly sinless life, and shed His incorruptible blood for the sins of the whole world so that anyone here even today who is without Christ can turn to Christ today and have his sins forgiven.

Jesus Christ died and rose again.

Jesus Is Coming Again

But He said, "I will come again." The Bible says that we are to be looking for the blessed hope, the glorious return of Jesus Christ. As Christians, one day we'll be gathered up from this earth and taken to be with the Lord. But that is *not* the second coming.

The second coming is when Jesus returns with His saints literally to inhabit, occupy and rule here on this earth. The second coming is prophesied in many Scriptures, as it is in Daniel 7:22: "Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." Notice also verses 9 and 10:

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. . . . the judgment was set, and the books were opened."

"Ancient of days" is another name for Jesus Christ. "Ancient of days" refers to His eternal preexistence. One of the reasons we dispute the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons regarding Jesus Christ is that they would say that He was simply a man who became like God. But we believe that He was God eternally preexistent who, when He came to Bethlehem's manger, was God, who had become Man.

"Ancient of days," then, describes His eternity, His eternal preexistence. Jesus Christ, "the Ancient of Days," will come at the end of the age, destroy those kingdoms that have supported the Antichrist, dethrone the Antichrist and establish His rule and reign just like He promised David in the Davidic Covenant when He said He would establish a kingdom and rule forever.

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all

the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30).

Imagine that! The kings of the earth have gathered around the Antichrist, but all of a sudden, here comes Christ Himself—not a little baby in the manger, but King of kings and Lord of lords. The Bible says His vesture is dipped in blood and He is accompanied by the saints and the angelic beings from Heaven. He comes to establish His kingdom. He is robed in white. Then He opens the books of judgment.

Three Sets of Books

There are three books of judgment: (1) There is the Bible. (2) There is the book of rewards that will be opened at the time of the believers' judgment, the judgment seat of Christ. (3) Then there is the great white throne judgment where the Lamb's Book of Life is opened. The Bible talks about these events:

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12).

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

My friend, if you are not one hundred percent sure that you are saved, that your sins are forgiven and that you are on your way to Heaven, don't think you need to wait for some deathbed conversion. Don't pass this off as some kind of fancy or fiction. The Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Every one of us will stand before God someday. If we have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, that will be a glorious day. He will say, "Enter into My presence." But if we have rejected Christ, it will be a tragic hour indeed.

Jesus will come. He will make all the

wrongs right. He will judge the world and establish His kingdom on this earth as a wonderful and eternal kingdom.

“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away” (Dan. 7:14).

The Antichrist’s dominion is seven years in length, but the dominion of Christ is an everlasting dominion. It is an everlasting kingdom.

“Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High” (Dan. 7:22). “But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion [speaking of the Antichrist], to consume and to destroy it unto the end” (Dan. 7:26); but the dominion of Jesus will go on and on.

When Jesus comes, He will establish a literal kingdom, a dominion that will be powerful. Sometimes we look at Isaiah 9:6, 7 as a Christmas text, but it has more to do with the second coming of Christ than with the first coming of Christ.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

The kingdom that Jesus will establish will be, first, according to Daniel 7:14, an eternal kingdom; second, according to verses 22 through 27, it will be a literal kingdom; third, according to verses 11 and 26, it will be a righteous kingdom, for the Antichrist will have been removed.

Here we see the one-world order of peace that will finally come to this world. It will not be brought in by a confederation of nations or by the Beast or the Wicked One, but it will be established by Jesus Christ Himself.

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What Does This All Mean?

People today are focused on so many things. Some are focused on the stock market. They know that the situation in the Middle East will affect their retirement.

Others are focused on the terrorists. What if the groups in Al-Qaeda are related somehow to the Hamas militants? Saddam Hussein, who can send moneys into Israel, could also be sending moneys into America, and there are militant people here in this country who would terrorize us. There are people right now, this morning, who are studying those facts and defending our land.

Some are focused on the Holy Land and how to bring peace.

Some are focused on other world leaders.

But primarily, first and foremost, we need to move our focus from the things of this world and put our concern on making preparation for eternity.

This is not some half-cocked opinion of some man. This is from the Scriptures. If you reject Christ, you’re not rejecting a church or me or any other Christian. You are rejecting the very Word of God. That will be your moral choice, your spiritual choice.

All these events unfolding in this world today should bring us to some choices.

Make the Choice for Christ and Salvation

“For God hath not appointed us to wrath . . .” (1 Thess. 5:9).

We’ve talked about the Tribulation and the Antichrist and wrath. This has been a serious message, but here’s some good news: God has not appointed us to wrath. That would refer to the wrath of the Tribulation or to the wrath of eternity without Christ. That’s not what God has appointed believers to. God has appointed us “. . . to obtain salvation. . . .”

I like the word *salvation*. I like the word *saved*. I like being rescued from certain death. God says you can have salvation. Someone says, “Good. I don’t want to go to Hell. I don’t want to suffer wrath. How can I have salvation?”

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This is where “religion” messes it up, for it seems today that churches have eighty-seven different ways of salvation. Some say salvation is through the baptism waters. Some say it’s through the sacraments. Some say you can get saved if you confess your sins to a priest. Some say you get saved by joining their church. But how does someone really get salvation.

The Bible says: *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Perhaps someone here today says, “I don’t want to suffer wrath. I want to be saved.” The Bible says salvation is through Jesus Christ, “who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (1 Thess. 5:10).

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). That one name is the name Jesus Christ. It’s not the name Baptist. It’s not the name Catholic. There is one name that brings salvation, and that name is Jesus Christ.

When the unsaved come to the realization that they are sinners and that our world diplomacy and our world religions haven’t worked; when they realize there is but one Messiah, one Saviour, who lived and died and rose again and they ask Jesus Christ to forgive their sins and be their Saviour, the Bible says, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

You can get baptized but if you reject Christ as your Saviour, you will not be saved from the wrath to come.

If you’re not sure of your eternal destiny, not sure that you will be with Jesus for all of eternity, I would encourage you today to come humbly to the Lord and by faith ask Him to be your Saviour.

If you have already made that decision in your life and you have a spiritual birth date when you passed from death to life, here is a passage for you:

“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto

you” (1 Thess. 5:1).

Get Focused Right

If you’re saved and you’re in the Book, you know that the times and the seasons we’re living in are unique. The problem today is that many saved people are so tired and busy and maybe involved in the things of the world to the point that they are more concerned about the stock market or getting to a restaurant than they are worried or thinking about what’s happening in the world today.

It says, *“Ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”* (1 Thess. 5:1, 2).

No one knows when it’s going to happen, but it will come “as a thief in the night.”

“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: ye are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thess. 5:3-6).

If you can say, “I have been saved by the blood of Christ, I know that I have been saved from the wrath to come,” then here is the challenge from the Scripture: “that you would live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world”—that your life at work tomorrow would be the life of someone who is expecting Jesus to come again, that you would witness and live for Christ and not waste your life with anger and pettiness and squabbling with your spouse and fighting unworthy battles, that you would not live for the things of this world but live for Jesus Christ in light of His imminent return.

If you’re not ready for His return, will you trust Him as your Saviour today? If you have trusted Him as your Saviour, would you live for Him in light of His imminent return? ■

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From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Education by Indoctrination

In Turkmenistan, humility is not the president's strong suit. Neither is wisdom, but this has not stopped Saparmurat Niyazon from running the nation's education system. Dictator since 1985, President Niyazon has covered the nation with posters bearing his image and the slogan, "Halk. Watan. Bekir Turkmenbashi" ("People. Nation. Great Head of All Turkmen"), and *he* is the "Great Turkmenbashi." Thus inflated with his own importance, Niyazon has made his revisionist history of the nation, *Book of the Soul*, required reading for all. In 1993, Niyazon switched the official Turkmen alphabet from the Cyrillic to the Latin script, but neglected to train the teachers. Furthermore, only 20 percent of the textbooks and none of the public library books (with the exception of those written by Niyazon) have been updated to reflect the change in alphabet. Finally, regardless of their performance, all students are granted secondary school certificates.¹

Similar educational absurdities abounded in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. While the U.S.-led coalition toppled his regime in a matter of days in 2003, it will take decades to unravel his corrupt educational legacy. With a "National Education Course" and required summer camps, he immersed

Iraqi youth in Ba'ath Party philosophy, including the requirement that they turn in parents who discuss Party secrets. In a textbook on "national culture," Hussein said that martyrdom was the most honorable profession.²

Unfortunately, education abuse is not limited to the developing world. Both the United Kingdom and the United States have versions of their own.³ In Britain, political correctness and religious skepticism are ascendant. The United Kingdom's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority requires that religious education give prominence to non-Christian worldviews such as Hinduism and atheism. Proponents of this reform urged the term, "religious education," be replaced with "religious, philosophical, and moral education." They also suggested that God be officially defined as "a divine being whose moral judgments are considerably more reliable than ours."⁴

Across the Atlantic, American schools teach moral relativism. One popular textbook, *Learning about Sex*, calls students to become their own moral authority: "Remember, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers—just *your* answers."⁵ Meanwhile, parents are treated as obstacles, not guides, to life. Teachers elicit and affirm negative thoughts about parents to increase a

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student's sense of independence. As part of a "values-clarification" program, third-graders in Oregon were asked the question, "How many of you ever wanted to beat up your parents?"⁶

Of course, in many ways American and British schools are superior to those supervised by Saddam and Niyazon, but there is no nation where Christian parents can surrender their children's moral education to the state. Some administrators have un-Christian agendas; others are simply cowards who cave in to the demands of anti-Christian activists. The results are the same: the children's heads are filled with foolishness, their wills bent toward ruinous behavior.

Niyazon is not the only non-Christian educator working from his or her version of the *Book of the Soul*. All teachers seek to shape souls according to their own convictions. They indoctrinate by what they emphasize or deemphasize, by what they honor, dishonor, or neglect. So from Turkmenistan to Iraq to Britain to the United States, Christian parents must be vigilant, insuring that their children hear the truth with authority and honor. They cannot surrender soul craft to the government. ■

FOOTNOTES

1. Turkmenistan Helsinki Initiative, "Education in Turkmenistan," *St. Anthony's College Oxford Website* (2004), <http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/lareastudies/Turkmenistan/Education.pdf>. See also "Brain Dead," *The Economist* (U.S.), July 24, 2004, 42.
2. For articles regarding corruption in Iraqi education, see Vivienne Walt, "Rewriting the History of Books in Baghdad," *Toronto Star*, September 28, 2003, F4.; Bill Glauber, "Children Find School Daze in Baghdad," *Chicago Tribune*, May 1, 2003, 3; James Hilder & Rosie Garthwaite, "Baghdad Pupils Face Lessons in Hardship," *The Times*, October 2, 2003, 18.
3. For examples, see *Kairos Journal* articles, "Heather Has Two Mommies" and "Should Jenny Live with Eric and Martin?"
4. Mick Hume, "Pay Attention, Class, Today's Reading Is From the Gospel According to St. Quango," *The Times* (U.K.), February 16, 2004, 16.
5. Thomas Sowell, *Inside American Education: The Decline, the Deception, the Dogmas* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 53.
6. *Ibid.*, 49.

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PAUL BRAND . . . cont'd.

before going to India, Brand started reconstructing hands and feet, making them useful again. Dr. Brand was the first surgeon in the world to use reconstructive surgery to correct these deformities caused by leprosy. Although the lepers now had the ability to work they were not able to find or keep jobs because of their deformities. Paul and Margaret then went to work to solve this new problem. They learned how to reconstruct noses, replace eyebrows, and to prevent blindness—a side effect of the disease.

Brand's skill as a carpenter was used of the Lord in the lives of his patients. He was able to teach them how to work with wood without further injuring their hands and fingers.

In 1953 Brother Brand joined The Leprosy Mission in India and was appointed as their Director of Surgery and Rehabilitation in 1964.

In 1966, after many years of work in India, Paul Brand went to the U. S. Public Health Service Hospital in Carville, Louisiana. This facility is the only one of its kind in the U.S. and it is well-known around the world as a center for leprosy research. Dr. Brand was the director of the Rehabilitation Branch until he retired in 1986. From 1993-99 he was the President of The Leprosy Mission, International. During his retirement he continued his leprosy work as an advisor to the mission as well as to the World Health Organization. He also was Clinical Professor of Orthopaedics, Emeritus at the University of Washington in Seattle where he resided.

Brand received many awards for his outstanding work in the field of medicine, including an award from Queen Elizabeth II. In spite of his busy schedule as a surgeon, Brother Brand also wrote 100 scientific papers and 7 books—one with the interesting title, *Pain—The Gift Nobody Wants*. In his life's work he was well acquainted with both physical and spiritual pain. He learned that pain is a necessary part of our lives, not something to be avoided. God uses it for our ultimate good. When we

(continued on page 20)

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

MAY 1, 2005

One True Gospel

Galatians 1:1-12

For the month of May we will be studying Paul's letter to the Galatian churches. Galatians was written to counteract false teaching that carried the potential of destroying the effect of the gospel in the churches of Galatia. William Barclay wrote, "It is just because Paul's letters were written to meet a threatening danger or clamant need that they still throb with life. And it is because human need and the human situation do not change that God speaks to us through them today." Let's be alert to capture the lessons these texts hold for us. A repeated reading of the book will greatly help your understanding of Paul's message—both to the Galatian believers and to believers in the 21st century.

Paul begins his letter with a reiteration of his apostolic credentials. He declares that his authority does not come from human appointment, but directly from Jesus Christ and God the Father. This explanation was essential to lend credibility to the argument to follow. Paul wanted it to be clear in the minds of his readers that the argument he presented was not his idea but had its source in the very basis of the gospel message. He was only God's mouthpiece.

Paul extends personal greetings and greetings from fellow believers and co-workers to the believers in Galatia. He extends grace and peace, wishing them, in that, the blessings of God. He also emphasizes the saving work of Christ in providing deliverance from the grip of the pres-

ent evil age. He concludes his greeting with praise to God.

Paul then moves immediately to his purpose for writing and to the crux of the problem (discussed more fully in next Sunday's lesson). The Galatian churches were in danger of moving away from the simplicity of the gospel message, salvation by faith alone in Christ, to a more complicated mixture of faith plus works. Paul was deeply concerned. Such a move would compromise the gospel and be a detriment to their faith.

Paul is unsparing in his condemnation of those who would pervert the gospel of Christ. He calls God's curse upon them. He reiterates for emphasis that such as preach other than the pure, simple gospel, even though it be an angel from heaven, shall be anathema.

Paul also makes it clear that he will not minimize his concern in order to curry favor with man. He is the servant of God, and will speak boldly on His behalf. His allegiance is to God and the gospel delivered by Him to be preached to mankind. The message of the gospel is not Paul's idea but was revealed to him by Jesus Christ. Paul is therefore under obligation both to proclaim it and defend it with all his ability and energies.

For thought and discussion

1. How did Paul meet the requirements for apostleship? What were they?
2. What is the rationale for an authoritative voice speaking on God's behalf in the church today?
3. Delve into the background for Paul's argument. What was happening in Galatia? How would that affect not only

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- them, but subsequent generations of Christians? Why was Paul so upset?
4. Why is it so easy to be turned away from simple faith as the only means to salvation? How can we counteract that tendency today?
 5. Are we too slow at times to speak out clearly against issues, or individuals, who would compromise the pure gospel? Perhaps spend class time discussing this.

MAY 8, 2005

Salvation Is by Faith Alone

Galatians 2:15–3:5

Paul's great concern over the Galatian churches had to do with a perversion of the simple gospel, the adding of Jewish restrictions to those coming to faith from among the Gentiles. In last Sunday's lesson he defended the simple faith-based gospel. In today's lesson he clarifies that the controversy was between simple faith and faith plus works of the Law. For immediate background to today's text be sure to read verses 11-14 of Chapter 2.

Certain Christian Jews were declaring that Gentiles coming to faith in Christ needed also to observe certain Jewish rites and rituals. To Paul's understanding of justification alone by faith this was heresy. He had just explained his previous altercation with Peter whose duplicity had created confusion in the church at Antioch.

Paul says we Jews who have come to faith in Christ have understood the inability of the Law to provide justification. Why then revert to works of the Law to secure favorable standing with God? It just doesn't make sense to proclaim as sinners those who have come to faith in Christ yet fail to observe the Law. Paul says through the effect of the Law, in leading him to faith, he died to the demands of the Law and is now alive in Christ Jesus.

Then comes Paul's beautiful testimony (v. 20), of his relationship to Christ

through faith. He has died, yet he lives. Self-interests have given place to the interests of Christ and the gospel. His life and energies are totally devoted to the One "who loved me and gave himself for me." He further says that he does not disannul the grace of God by adding to it works of Law. Otherwise, if justification could have been secured through the Law, then it would not have been necessary for Christ to have died.

Paul then appeals to the sensibilities of the Galatians while also issuing a severe rebuke for their departure from simple faith. Did they receive the Holy Spirit by observing the works of the Law? Was the work of the Spirit inadequate in their lives? Was it necessary to add works of the flesh to the work of the Spirit in order to secure right standing with God?

The Galatian believers had been led astray. Paul was calling them to a clear evaluation of their professed faith. What had happened to bring this confusion into their experience? Why had they fallen prey to the insidious influences of the Judaizers? Was not Christ sufficient? His rebuke and appeal was for them to think seriously about their situation, with the end view of correcting their fault and returning to a faith-only approach to justification.

Paul's discourse to the Galatian believers had benefit, not only for them. It carries implications for believers in every age. Christians must continually be alert in defense of simple faith as the means of securing right standing with a holy God. None of man's efforts can add anything to his initial belief and acceptance of God's grace as a means of salvation. It is by grace alone. Let's not frustrate the grace of God by adding man's inferior works to it.

For thought and discussion

1. Review again the means to salvation and the validity, if any, of adjunct issues.
2. According to Paul's argument, what was at stake for the Galatian churches? and, by extension, for us?

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3. Should not every Christian take Paul's testimony in verse 20 as his own? How can we work it out in daily living? How does your commitment correspond?
4. How are individuals and churches led astray today? What safeguards should be in place? Perhaps you would want to discuss these issues with your class.
5. Why does man have a tendency to want to add his efforts to the work of God?

MAY 15, 2005

The Purpose of the Law

Galatians 3:19-29; 4:4-7

Up to this point in his letter Paul has been arguing against the Law as a means of gaining right standing with God. Logically, then, here in verse 19, he asks the question, Just what then is the purpose of the Law? It would seem he had negated any validity for the Law, so why had it been given? In this passage he explains God's purpose for the Law and its function for man.

The Law was given, Paul says, through a mediator, Moses, for the purpose of showing man his sinfulness. It was to be an interim relationship until the Promised One should come who would institute a relationship superior to that achieved by adherence to the Law. That relationship was what Paul had proclaimed and was now defending to the Galatian believers.

Paul emphasizes the deficiency of the Law: it could only point out man's sin; it had no inherent power to cure it. The Scripture declares all under sin, but it also holds out justification by faith in Christ Jesus. The Law served a purpose in God's scheme of things, holding all under its moral restrictions until the promise given to the fathers of a new covenant relationship would come. That relationship was to be a faith-based one. It was instituted by Christ and His work on the cross.

The function of the Law was like that of a family slave who led a child to his

teacher. It had an ancillary function, to show need and point to the source of help for that need. Right standing before God was to be achieved through faith in the saving work of Christ. Once brought to that point, man no longer needed the Law.

Now, Paul says, all become "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And that faith-relationship to Christ obliterates all distinctions of race, sex, or social position. No one who has "put on Christ" can claim superiority over other believers. All are on common ground; all come to Him in like manner; all experience justification by the same route. And that, Paul says, makes us all the children of Abraham, and heirs to the promise made to him.

The passage from Chapter 4 outlines that when everything was ready in God's timetable He sent the Redeemer to release man from the tyranny of the Law. Paul sets forth several principles in these verses. He affirms the sovereignty of God, the incarnation of the divine Son, and explains the work He was sent to earth to do. Note, too, that Christ's coming was according to the Law and in fulfillment of the Law. This was to convince God's people, the Jews, of the integrity of the event.

Through this event man can now receive adoption into the family of God. As such he enjoys an intimate relationship to the Father, confirmed by the Spirit of God in his heart, and is placed in a position of heirship with the Sovereign God of the universe. What a privilege!

For thought and discussion

1. Do you understand the purpose and function of the Law? Review it.
2. If the Law was inadequate, why did God wait so long to send Christ as Saviour?
3. Think through, carefully, the leveling influence of the gospel.
4. What does it mean to "put on Christ"? Have you experienced it? What difference does that make in one's life?
5. Ponder the privileges and blessings of being part of God's family and heir to His riches.

MAY 22, 2005

Liberty in Christ

Galatians 5:1-15

Paul had just finished explaining that those who relied solely on the grace of God for salvation were children of the freewoman (4:31). Therefore, he says, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." His appeal was for the believers to be firm and settled as to the means of their salvation and the freedom which that provided from the ceremonial Law. Don't go back into bondage to the rituals of the Law was Paul's cry.

To go back to the Law in an attempt to seek favor with God would nullify the work of Christ, Paul says. The way of grace and the way of Law are mutually exclusive. Also, to accept or practice one element of the Law obligates one to an observance of the demands of the entire Law.

A person who turns back to the Law for justification refutes the work of grace in his life. As Barclay says, "The man who makes law the principle of his life is in the position of a slave, whereas the man who makes grace the principle of his life is free." Paul is incredulous that anyone having experienced grace would turn again to the "weak and beggarly elements" of the Law. The Galatians were doing it. And the problem has not disappeared in the 21st century.

Paul again emphasizes faith as the key to belief (vv. 6, 7). Faith produces the long look, the look to the future. It is also the instigator of works of love, one's response to the gift of grace through Christ Jesus.

In verse seven Paul changes his tone from lecturing to commendation. He acknowledges that they began the Christian race well, but recognizes, too, that someone had thrown a stumbling block in their path. He quickly points out that this impetus for change in their spiritual

development did not originate with God, the One who called them to faith. It had a human source and Paul warns against the leavening influence of the Judaizers.

Paul expresses confidence in the Galatian believers' ability to weigh his concern and come out on the right side of the issue. Those who interfere with the spiritual progress of others will bear divine judgment. God is not happy when those promoting a devious philosophy derail His children from their spiritual path. Paul also inveighs against them.

Paul cautions the Galatians that liberty does not equal license. Freedom from the ritual aspects of Law does not free one from its moral obligations. Christian liberty dare never be used as an excuse to engage the fulfillment of one's fleshly desires. That is contrary to the whole concept of freedom in Christ. That freedom does not give us liberty to do what we want, but what we should, as energized by God's Spirit.

Paul closes this section with an appeal to brotherly love. Strife, dispute, and discord are not fruits of brotherly love, but arise from dissension and wrangling over differing opinions and lead to division and destruction. Paul cautions the Galatian believers to not destroy brotherhood by conflict over spiritual issues. His warning is still valid today.

For thought and discussion

1. Think through carefully the superiority of grace above the Law.
2. Why do Christians think they need to add to the gift of grace to enhance their standing with God? Does it work?
3. Which is easier to do, scold or entreat? Why? Which brings better results?
4. What are the boundaries of Christian liberty?
5. Why is it so difficult to obey the command to "love our neighbor as ourself"? Why did Jesus call this the second great commandment?

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MAY 29, 2005

Walking in the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-6:10

We close our study in the Book of Galatians with a description of the life and actions of one who, having experienced the saving grace of Christ, is now living under the control of God's Spirit. There are certain things which will not characterize that life (verses 19-21), and certain things that will (our text for today). There is a certain and definite distinction to the person so absorbed by God's Spirit; their life and actions set them apart from those who give free rein to fleshly desires.

Notice that verse 24 says, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with (its) affections and lusts." That life is now driven by Spirit qualities—love, joy, peace, patience, etc. All actions are submissive to the control of God's Spirit, there is no self-promotion or desire to antagonize one's brother for selfish means.

In Chapter 6 Paul moves from describing the personal life of the believer to showing his responsibility to his fellow believers. There will be failures in the lives of God's people and those who stumble are to be ministered to by those who are strong. Those doing the ministering are to do it in meekness, remembering their own proclivity to failure. No one is so spiritually strong that he cannot stumble, and that awareness should keep one humble and dependent upon God. In a time of spiritual crises, our brother needs the support and encouragement of fellow believers.

Paul then turns to the matter of support for those whose time and energies are spent in communicating the Word. This responsibility goes beyond mere moral support, it is also to include material compensation. Paul makes it clear in verse seven that one's personal spiritual well-being is directly related to his willingness to share the burden of gospel ministry.

The one who is Spirit-prompted to share in the ministry of the Word will be blessed

with spiritual blessings and a life of eternal quality. On the other hand, the one who looks out only for himself and the fulfilling of fleshly desires, will reap a bitter harvest.

Therefore, Paul says, let's do good, and not become weary in so doing. There is reward in the end. Then Paul lays down that timeless principle of Christian charity, doing good to all men, but principally to those who are members of the household of faith. One's Christian obligation does not stop at the door of the church, it expands into the whole universe of need. As Eerdman says, "Our kindness should extend as widely as our influence, and in all our dealings we should show that the liberty which we enjoy in Christ is manifested by a continual observance of the divine law of love."

And so we conclude our study of the Book of Galatians, having established the one true gospel, that salvation is by faith without admixture of works, that true liberty is found in submission to Christ, and that that relationship results in a Spirit-directed life exemplified by love. Have you been challenged by your study of Galatians?

For thought and discussion

1. Take time to explore the various fruit of the Spirit. Are they evident in your life?
2. Think carefully about the implications of "walking in the Spirit," and how that affects personal relationships.
3. How encompassing is the command to "bear one another's burdens"? Maybe some discussion would be helpful.
4. Those who give themselves to the preaching and teaching of the gospel deserve compensation for their time and energies. Discuss with your class some practical ways this can be done in the local setting.
5. Why does it seem so easy at times to become weary in well doing?
6. The exercise of Christian charity is a hallmark of the Christian brotherhood. Discuss practical ways this can be carried out in light of Paul's direction in verse 10. ■

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

Newslines . . .

by Rebecca Good

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The Beauty of Life

The most central and consistent teaching of Pope John Paul II's papacy has been his defense of human life in all its forms. The Pope opposes all abortion, all capital punishment, all euthanasia, and all artificial contraception. He does believe that some wars may be just (but he opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq as not proportional to the threat). Now as the Pope visibly wastes from Parkinson's disease, the world watches as he suffers, living out the truth of his own message.

Parkinson's sufferers face a long road of decline, fatigue, inability to breathe deeply, and swallowing difficulty. Coughing effectively (sometimes necessary), may become almost impossible because of the body's weakened and stooped condition.

Dr. Abraham Lieberman, medical director of the National Parkinson Foundation in Miami believes the Pope was suffering from the disease as early as 1986. According to Dr. Lieberman, it is amazing that the Pope is still functioning as well as he is. Many Parkinson's sufferers buckle to apathy because life's tasks get so much harder. Lieberman commented, "Most people would have given up by now. That speaks to the Pope being a very remarkable person."

Pope John Paul II does not discourage comparisons of his struggle with the agony of Christ. Suffering links human experience to Jesus and His suffering. As Jesus

endured pain and humiliation He appeared to be defeated, but that moment turned into His greatest triumph, as He paid for human sin, and opened the way to heaven.

Those who ask if the Pope is still capable of administering the Roman Catholic Church do not fully understand. John Paul II does not consider himself to be a CEO [Chief Executive Officer], but sees himself as fulfilling a divine mission. Pain is integral to that mission. After a recent bout in the hospital, the fragile pontiff told the world's sick, "Your suffering is never useless . . . it's a precious thing."

—from *Newsweek*

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The Power of Advertising

Why do more people prefer Coke? In blind taste tests, more people always prefer Pepsi. Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine performed a blind test; as usual, Pepsi came out on top. Then the researchers performed a test where the same tasters were shown the company logos before they drank. Result? Three out of four preferred Coke. During the test, scans of the brain picked up wild activity in the brain centers associated with memories and self-image when tasters saw the red-and-white Coke label. Pepsi's blue label caused little reaction in the brain.

The hippocampus is the brain's memory vault and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is the area of the brain responsible for working memory and control of behavior.

These are the areas that “lit up” during the test. Apparently, Coke has found a powerful connection to the human psyche.

—from *U.S. News & World Report*

What Can the Human Body Really Do?

Ultra marathoners race 50 to 100 miles at one time. The longest distance run by one man at one shot is thought to be 262 miles in 75 hours.

—from *TIME*

Inductive vs. Deductive

Author Lee Strobel hosts a television program called “Faith Under Fire.” PAX carries the program. Various guests debate issues such as the reliability of Scripture, Islam, goddess worship, and racial segregation in the church. Strobel invites guests from every stratum and lets them battle out moral and religious issues.

The show is interesting and proves that Christianity is home to rich intellectual treasures. Yet, the debates seem merely to cancel each other out and no side ever really wins. As Gene Edward Veith says, “Clearly, Christianity is not just the solution to an intellectual puzzle, or something all would believe in, if they just hear the right arguments. Rather, Christianity is a state of being, and belief is a gift of grace.”

—from *WORLD*

Keyboards vs. Penmanship

Americans’ interest in cursive writing seems to be declining—The National Cursive Handwriting Test was recently cancelled because of lack of entries. The entries that were submitted were deemed garbage by the authorities.

But advocates say penmanship has greater benefits than first meet the eye. They cite research claiming a direct link between the process of learning to write and learning to read fluently. Some say that children’s ideas start to flow better when they learn cursive. Penmanship

requires hand-eye coordination. Most importantly of all, handwritten communication between humans will always have value.

—from *The Washington Times*

Eugene Peterson on the Church

“Frederick von Hugel said the institution of the church is like the bark on the tree. There’s no life in the bark. It’s dead wood. But it protects the life of the tree within. And the tree grows and grows and grows and grows. If you take the bark off, it’s prone to disease, dehydration, death.

“So, yes, the church is dead but it protects something alive. And when you try to have a church without bark, it doesn’t last long. It disappears, gets sick, and it’s prone to all kinds of disease, heresy, and narcissism.”

—Eugene Peterson as quoted in *Christianity Today*

PAUL BRAND . . . cont’d.

are in pain it is an opportunity to exercise our faith in the Lord. Pain is really one of God’s blessings.

Paul Wilson Brand was a man of great compassion. He valued his patients as human beings who deserved respect and needed dignity. Because of Christ’s love shining through Paul and his staff he saw lives transformed physically and spiritually. He was very precise in his scientific research and tireless in his efforts. He was also a man of theological depth but was able to make the Word of God plain and understandable to his hearers. A man of deep spiritual humility, his life was characterized by simple prayer and belief—total dependence upon God in every part of his life, both personal and medical.

Dr. Brand is remembered as one who helped rebuild the lives of hopeless outcasts by bringing light and hope.

Paul Wilson Brand went home to be with his Lord July 8, 2003, at the Swedish Hospital in Seattle, Washington, at the age of 89. —Gail L. Emerson

The Meaning of Conversion

by George W. Peters

The salvation of God has an objective as well as a subjective aspect, which is eternal as well as in-time.

The eternal and objective aspect refers to God's gracious purpose and plan of salvation when His saving entrance into history in and through Christ Jesus, who was born of the virgin Mary, took on true humanity and thus was the true God-man. According to the Scriptures: "He was made sin for us who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21) and "was made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). In obedience "He emptied himself . . . and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7, 8). His sinless, yea perfect life, vicarious death, victorious bodily resurrection and glorious exaltation procured salvation for all mankind. Thus stands the eternal salvation of God in Christ, having neither been foreseen nor pleaded for by man. It is of God alone as it is also in Christ alone that our glorying be in God and not in man.

The salvation of God, however, has very definitely a subjective and an in-time aspect. Eternity with its spiritual glory, fullness, and blessings is invading time. Salvation is now and here. God in Christ Jesus and through the Holy Spirit is entering the human life; salvation is entering me. Thus salvation is not merely an objective reality to be wondered at, a theological dictum to be debated about, a philosophical theory to be speculated about, not even merely a marvelous subject to be preached about. It is divine reality entering the human being to transform his fundamental disposition, lean him from sin and unrighteousness, redeem him from bondage and corruption, impart unto him the nature of God, recreate him into the image of Christ, make him a child of God in a life of true discipleship in the midst of

a world almost destitute of the consciousness of God and eternity.

Our study concerns itself with the subjective and in-time aspect of salvation under the subject "The Meaning of Conversion." After a brief general statement we shall consider the subject in the following order: the historical-exegetical unfolding of the doctrine; the exegetical-theological presentation of conversion; essential elements of Biblical conversion; the theological interpretation of conversion.

A brief general statement. The doctrine of conversion is written in bold letters across the passages of the Bible. It is set forth with great emphasis in the Old Testament, is strongly reiterated in the Gospels and boldly preached by the apostles. It is a concept deeply rooted in divine revelation. As such it has been recognized by Biblical theology and such as it was emphatically preached by our fathers in the faith.

The Historical-Exegetical Unfolding of the Doctrine

The Hebrew Old Testament. The word *conversion* and its related terms are a translation of the Hebrew verb *schub* which is found approximately 1056 times in the Old Testament. The word *schub* is used in a variety of ways and in general carries the meaning of: Turning, returning, turning away, restoring, converting, turning unto, etc. It is a most general term and appears in many different relationships and it is used both of things and of persons.

Approximately 118 times it is used in a moral and religious sense in the Old Testament and definitely expresses the idea of religious conversion in the sense of returning to the Lord, turning from sin, with the consequent restoration of fellowship, restoration into a position of blessing and usefulness.

The following references in the Old

Testament are listed for comparison: *Unto the Lord*—Deut. 4:30; 30:2, 10; 1 Sam. 7:3; 1 Kings 8:33; 1 Chron. 6:38; 30:9; Neh. 9:26; Job 22:23; Psalm 22:27; 51:13; Isaiah 19:22; 55:7; 60:5; Jer. 3:7; 4:1; 24:7; Lam. 3:40; Hosea 12:6; 14:2, 3; Joel 2:12, 13; Mal. 3:7. *From sins*—1 Kings 8:35; 2 Chron. 6:38; 30:9; Neh. 9:35; Isaiah 59:20; Jer. 25:5; Ezekiel 18:28; 33:11, 14; Jonah 3:10. *God's work*—1 Kings 18:37; Psalm 23:3; Isaiah 10:22; 52:8; Jer. 31:18, 19; Lam. 5:21; Mal. 4:6.

The Greek Old Testament. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Hebrew verb *schub* is translated by *epistrephein*, *apostrephein*, and *anastrephein*, words which express the same general idea as *schub*.

The New Testament. The New Testament follows the Septuagint and employs the same words to convey the Christian idea of conversion. Thus the word *epistrephein* is used 36 times (according to some manuscripts 39 times) of which 18 times have a religious meaning (Matt. 13:15; Mark 4:12; Luke 1:16, 17; 22:32; Acts 3:1; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18; 26:20; 28:27; 2 Cor. 3:16; 1 Thess. 1:9; James 5:19, 20; 1 Peter 2:25); *strephein* is employed only in Matthew 18:3 and John 12:40; *apostrephein* is found only in Acts 3:26, and the noun *epistrophe* only in Acts 15:3.

The above list of references from the Old and New Testaments establishes the following facts regarding the basic meanings of conversion in the historical-exegetical unfolding:

1. Conversion in its concept and experience originates in God. It is neither a human invention nor the product of the human mind, will, or emotions. It is originated in the mind and will of God. As in Genesis 1:1 so also here we write, "In the beginning God."
2. God Himself is the initiator of the conversion of man by: (a) commanding man to be converted; (b) calling man to return unto Him; (c) calling man to forsake sin; (d) upholding before man the promise of the forgiveness of sins,

restoration, and a life of rich blessings; and (e) warning man of judgment if he fails to heed God's call and command.

In order to save the Biblical concept of conversion from all unrighteous humanism, it is well to realize that the Word of God is not only self-authoritative, it is also dynamic, quickening, motivating, and causative. The command, call, promise, and warning of God carry in them the power of God to motivate and to enable man to respond positively to the Word of God. In faith man opens himself to the power of God in the Word and is thereby enabled to follow the command of God and to respond to the call for conversion (cf. Psalm 19:7, 8; John 6:63; Heb. 4:12).

3. God Himself is operative in conversion and thus in the final end, the ultimate cause of man's conversion rests in God and not in man himself. Without the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit spoken of at times as preventive grace, known as the convicting (John 16:8), drawing (John 12:32), and illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, no man would ever turn to God and be converted (John 1:7-9).
4. Conversion as seen from the above data is a conscious, radical, principal turning of man with all his heart to God and from sin and ungodliness, a turning which affects the whole of man's life in all its relationships.
5. There is a possibility of false "conversion," conversions which are merely psychological, an escape from judgments rather than sin, or half-heartedness, or to false gods. Thus they are inadequate in the dynamic, motivation, or purpose.

The Exegetical-Theological Meaning of Conversion

The word *conversion* seems to have threefold meaning in the Bible: (1) It refers to any kind of turning, whether physical, mental, or otherwise. This is the *general* usage and is not of special interest in this study. (2) It may refer to a change of attitude, relationship, or life due to a clearer

insight, changed circumstances, changed motivations, changed purposes, or repentance. In this sense the Christian life is a life of conversion. (3) In a moral, religious sense it means that vital experience which in an inclusive manner expresses the totality of man's initial experience of salvation and thus in its idea includes regeneration, justification, adoption, initial sanctification, and union with Christ.

Basically the exegetical-theological meaning may be stated in the following definition: Conversion is that principal act of faith in which the soul by the initiative and enablement of the Holy Spirit on the basis of the finished work of Christ on Calvary and in response to the Word of God voluntarily turns to God from sin and ungodliness and enters into an abiding relationship with the Lord which vitally and permanently affects life in its various aspects and relationships and leads to its eventual and complete restoration.

Our definition establishes the following principles: (1) Conversion is a principal act of faith; (2) Conversion is an act of the soul by the initiative and the enablement of the Holy Spirit; (3) Conversion is based upon the finished work of Christ on Calvary; (4) Conversion is an act of the soul in response to the Word of God; (5) Conversion is a voluntary act; (6) Conversion is an act of turning to God from sin and ungodliness; (7) Conversion is an act which results in a relationship with the Lord; (8) Conversion is an act which vitally affects life in its various aspects and relationships; (9) Conversion is an act which leads to a process in the restoration of life. These principles are illustrated by the various Biblical records on conversion.

Essential Elements of Conversion

Conversion is essentially a turning to God and a turning away from sin. The two elements are usually expressed by the two biblical terms of *faith* and *repentance*.

It is very important to realize that the Bible emphasizes both aspects, although the emphasis upon the positive definitely

outweighs the negative; far more passages speak of turning to God than turning away from sin. It must be understood, however, that both aspects are always present, the one expressed, the other implied. They form an indissoluble unit in a Biblical conversion.

It is dangerous to read chronological order into experience of conversions as though faith precedes and conditions repentance or vice versa. To grasp the real meaning of these vital elements of conversion is of greater significance. We, therefore, turn our attention to them.

Repentance. The word *repentance* and its various derivatives are a translation of the Hebrew word *nocham* and the Greek words *metamelomai* and *metanoia*. The root meaning of *nocham* and *metanoia* in the religious usage indicates a principal change of mind and moral purpose, while *metamelomai* is used to express a state of sensibility as regret, remorse, and sorrow. Thus we are dealing with a deeply moral, religious concept that expresses man's relationship to sin and ungodliness, a concept full of spiritual significance which in its deepest meaning expresses man's practical sharing in Christ's view and attitude toward sin. Repentance thus becomes a holy abhorrence, a righteous condemnation, a conscious repudiation and renunciation and voluntary turning away from a life of sin, a determinate breaking with evil. If repentance were only a hard and painful duty, it would be negative and discouraging to the individual, but repentance is positive when it is seen in its relation to Christ, as a sharing in Christ's view and attitude toward sin.

The change may be comparatively a calm and quiet one, accompanied by sharp mental pain. The man may abhor himself, and be in an agony of sorrow before God in view of his sins. A man who knows himself as a sinner may well find penitence painful. But the sharpness of sorrow is not what constitutes the repentance; the repentance consists in the change of mind, resulting in change of life and the

sorrow for sin is accompaniment. A man repents when at last he begins to feel as Christ feels about evil in himself, and to act accordingly.¹

Faith. Repentance looks back and forsakes. Faith looks forward and appropriates. Repentance expresses man's attitude toward sin and ungodliness. Faith manifests man's relationship towards Christ and His promises. In the conversion experience "saving faith never outruns repentance."

The significance of the doctrine of faith is difficult to overstate. It is most prominent in the Bible. It is basic, central, fundamental, and consistent throughout the whole Bible. Its footprints can be discovered on every page of the divine record and it is the one universal distinctive mark of all great Bible characters. It begins where the divine grace begins to manifest itself in relation to man. In Christian experience it is the human complement to divine grace, being the response of the human soul to God's gracious manifestations and operations.

Basic to all faith is God and His gracious relation to man, making Himself known to man. "For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

A careful study of the word *faith* in the Old and New Testaments and the numerous biblical illustrations will justify the statement that faith is made up of spiritual illumination, conviction and acknowledgment, personal surrender, committal, dependence, trust, rest, appropriation, interaction, and obedience. All of this is most certainly substantial and beautifully illustrated by a careful study of John's use of the verb *to believe* and its synonyms, and the noun *faith* in Hebrews 11 and in the writings of Paul.

As we further penetrate the Scripture we discover that saving faith never stands by itself. It is always solidly in an object, which object is God, predominantly Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God (cf. John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 6:35, 40; 7:37-39; 11:25, 26; 12:36).

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It should be noted that in most of these verses the verb *to believe* is dominated by the preposition *e* is governing the accusative case and indicating movement towards or relationship with.

We believe that in the light of the above stated data we are within Scriptural truth when we say that saving or conversion-faith is a personal, living, interactive relationship between Christ and the sinner, a psychological compound which includes the illumination of our spiritual perception, a readiness of receptivity, the persuasion of trust, the exercise of appropriation, the dynamic of expression or obedience and the assurance to the degree of rest and confidence.

No Bible student will dispute that such faith is not human in origin. It is the gracious work of God wrought in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit and through the Word of God to which man must yield and which man must exercise. This is the will of God for every sinner.

Converting faith thus has as its origin the will of God; as its basis the Word of God; as its initiative the Spirit of God; as its object the Son of God; as its responsibility the exercise of man; as its result the transformation of the personality of man; as its end the eternal glory of God and the welfare of man.

The Theological Interpretation of Conversion

As we turn to the theological usage of the term, *conversion*, we find that in the main, conversion is considered the human aspect of the salvation experience. Thus the salvation experience is described as consisting of: regeneration (divine aspect); justification (the legal aspect); union with Christ (the mystic-realistic aspect); adoption (the filial aspect); and conversion (the human-moral aspect).

In keeping with this view several authorities will be quoted:

Conversion refers specifically to the voluntary act of the individual in turning from sin and seeking forgiveness and the new life. . . . Conversion, from the Latin *com*, together, and *vertere*,

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to turn, means primarily a turning forward. Theologically conversion is the changing of purpose, direction, and spirit of life from one of self-seeking and enmity toward God to one of love toward God and Man.²

By conversion is meant the response of a sinner under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, in which the sinner repents, renouncing his sin, and exercises faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord.³

Conversion is the word employed in theology to designate the turning of a sinner from his sins unto Christ for his salvation. This includes both the forsaking of sin which we have defined as repentance, and the trust in Christ which we have defined as faith. The term *conversion* usually refers to the outward act of the changed man which is the manifestation of the inner change in his soul. A converted man is one in whom the grace of God has wrought a spiritual change. That change has found inward expression in his turning from the old life of disobedience to the new life of service.⁴

Conversion is the human side or aspect of the fundamental spiritual change, which, as viewed from the divine side, we call regeneration. It is simply man's turning. . . . By conversion is meant that voluntary change in the mind of the sinner, in which he turns, on the one hand, from sin, and on the other hand, to Christ.⁵

In its more restricted meaning the word denotes the action of man in the initial process of salvation as distinguished from the action of God. Justification and regeneration are purely divine acts; repentance, faith, conversion are human acts, although under the influence and by the power of the divine agency. Thus conversion denotes the human volition and act by which man in obedience to the Divine summons determines to change the course of his life and turns to God. Arrested by God's call man stops to think, turns about, and heads the opposite way.⁶

From these theological presentations certain principles evolve: (1) Conversion presupposes a gracious operation of God.

(2) Conversion separates man in his will and practice from guilt, servitude, and love of sin. (3) Conversion converges upon Christ as Saviour and Lord, receiving from Him forgiveness of sin, a new content, meaning, and direction of life, a submission to obedience and the dynamic to serve Him. (4) Conversion is an outer manifestation of an inwrought work of grace from which it cannot be dissociated essentially. Nor can the two be classified chronologically.

Conclusion

In the light of the historical-exegetical unfolding and the exegetical-theological analysis and definition it seems that the theological usage of the word has suffered serious limitations. Adding to this the psychological studies in "conversion" the word has been thoroughly "humanized." Thus it has disappeared to a great extent from evangelical preaching and teaching. Theology needs to rediscover the Biblical significance of conversion and the proper usage of the word. Its disappearance from the theological vocabulary cannot be justified on Biblical grounds. Indeed, it is tragic. The concept, however, must be guarded lest it mean no more than a "human turning" or the exercise of the will in human strength and thus become an act of self-redemption or reforming.

Conversion is a biblical concept, expressing a great biblical truth and describing an experience, which is of God, by God, and unto God. ■

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FOOTNOTES

1. W. N. Clarke, *Christian Theology*, p. 402.
2. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, I, 704.
3. John C. Wenger, *Introduction to Theology*, p. 377.
4. E. Y. Mullins, *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*.
5. E. H. Bancroft, *Christian Theology*, p. 173.
6. J. L. Nuelsen, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, II, 706.

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Congregational Singing: The Approved Form of Music in Christian Worship

(Concluded)

by Clarence Y. Fretz

This present article climaxes the series. Brother Fretz deals with the very pertinent question of the relative place of (1) culture and entertainment that appeals to and develops the natural man (see 1 Cor. 2:1-5) as against (2) spiritual life and testimony which appeals to and develops the spiritual man (see 1 Cor. 2:10-16). You will appreciate the challenge to spiritual living as you read.

The Present Situation

The Mennonite churches, like others who originally had no other music but congregational singing in their worship, have been "rising" culturally in the past few generations. Most of us have had more formal education than our parents, who on their part had more than our grandparents. This has been reflected in our church life. Much more attention is given to formal study than in the immediately preceding generations, so that we now have Sunday schools, summer Bible schools, winter Bible schools, church schools, Bible colleges, and seminaries, youth institutes, and various kinds of conferences. These institutions do not merely dwell on the spiritual content of the Christian faith, but in increasing measure also on the manner of its expression and impartation. As a result we are increasingly interested in art, poetry, elocution, pedagogy, artistic music, and the like. "Culture" is considered to be of much greater value than formerly, and the display of cultural skills is thought to be so worthy of contemplation that an increasing number of us like to gather

to hear oratorical contests, debates, dramatic readings and "skits," musical concerts and literary programs.

It is to be expected that such cultural trends would be reflected in the musical portion of our church services. No longer do we sing slow tunes in unison. Singing schools have so contributed to our cultural advancement that we now sing both slow and fast tunes in four parts, and often attempt difficult harmony or intricate rhythmical patterns. Nor do we stop there. Our church schools have taught us that there is an enjoyment to be derived from listening to those who are the most skillful among us, as they artistically render for us certain lovely numbers which they have carefully mastered. While many of us are not ready for regular choirs and instruments in church worship, we have already moved in that direction by the introduction of special music at certain times in our public meetings. If this is good, occasionally, why not have it regularly? some are no doubt saying. And others ask, Why not enrich our singing by adding musical accompaniment? Many of us have become used to this (or even to love it) in public school; and may feel that a capella congregational singing is too lifeless and unsatisfying. Music educators tell us that "a true instrumental accompaniment will supply additional voices, increase the pitch range, add variety of tone quality, give amplified dynamic scope, and extend the gamut of expression." If all this is true, it will certainly be a cultural "advance" to add it to our singing!

This brings us to the fundamental

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issue involved in the whole question of music in church worship—how far shall we go in attempting to “refine” our worship music and “enrich” it culturally? Or, looking at the question in a broader way, how far shall we Mennonites go in the pursuit of a higher culture?

The inspired pronouncement of the prophet Amos gives us the answer: “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion . . . that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; . . . but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” When once we can fiddle while Rome burns, then we are, like Nero, on the road to disaster. When once we can loll in our pews and be pleased to have others spread a cultural feast before us, while two-thirds of mankind, ignorant of the only Name, are plunging into perdition, then woe be unto us! Even now this ugly disease, well named spectatoritis, is rendering us inert and impotent in a dying world. Instead of weeping over the anguish of a sin-sick innumerable multitude, we save what few tears we have left in our soft-cushioned, streamlined life for a little sentimental tenderness when our Johnnie reaches a touching point in his sophisticated oration, or when our Mary sings with especial pathos in a certain part of an oratorio.

But are not special music and instrumental music very effective in winning the lost? Large use is made of them by many modern “evangelistic” movements such as the Salvation Army, Pentecostals, and popular Fundamentalists (e.g. “Youth for Christ”). The Scripture says, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This would immediately rule out speechless instruments, except as “drawing cards,” something which real Spirit-filled evangelists like Peter, Menno Simons, and John Wesley did not need.

Special singing, however, can express an intelligent Scriptural message as

well as the inner exuberance of the life in Christ, and has often been used effectively to the salvation of souls. Paul and Silas sang a duet in the Philippian jail, and while we do not know of any conversions among their listeners, it must have had a profound effect upon them.

Such special singing, however, is not a substitute for congregational singing, but really only an exposed form of it. The reason Paul and Silas sang alone was that the rest did not have any song in their hearts, and so did not feel like helping. Paul and Silas were the whole congregation—the rest were only “listeners-in.” So it is when a few Christians hold a street meeting—they may all join in (congregational singing) but be singing to a large number of unsaved silent listeners (special singing).

There is a great need for just such witnessing in many places. But because of our consuming love of culture, very few “have time” or concern for such work. If perchance a male quartet or chorus is organized to assist in such work, it very rarely spends as much time in preparation, as it would if it were to give a “sacred concert” in some church. Moreover, it is still less likely to spend as much time in spiritual preparation as it is in practicing the music, i.e., in cultural preparation. Brethren, these things ought not so to be.

If we are going to save our churches from a deadening preoccupation with cultural enrichment and an almost inevitable trend toward the love of entertainment, we must take the following steps NOW:

1. **Pray, and pay the price for a real spiritual revival.** When Luther’s reformation fires burned strongly, his congregations sang, but when the fires burned low, they left it to the choirs and instruments. When the Wesleyan revival was at its height, the Methodists sang—whole congregations of them. But when the Methodists

became prosperous and cultured, they paid organists and choir leaders to provide the music in their worship services. When the early Mennonite movement waxed strong, in spite of fire and sword, our fathers sang—by congregations. But since Mennonites have “advanced” in material and cultural ways, they are content to sit silent in their pews, while others sing for them or to them. Oh, for a mighty revival that will make them want to sing again in rolling tides of enthusiastic congregational song.

2. Concentrate our musical training program on teaching all to sing simple singable hymns and gospel songs, rather than on training a select group to sing difficult, intricate musical compositions. If fewer and fewer learn more and more, then more and more will sing less and less, even if they can still sing fairly well. The presence of a highly trained critical group in the congregation will discourage others. We have been neglecting the old-fashioned singing class in favor of the mixed chorus. Let us have more singing classes! If we do not, then congregational singing will become so poor that people will think they need choirs and instruments to “help it along.”

3. Give first place to evangelism in our church work. Let us be so busy winning souls that we do not have time for cultural feasting. If our soul-winning program requires us to get a little cultural training, then let us be sure that we use this culture for evangelism, and not for a service to the flesh, tickling men’s ears, and making them merry when they should be weeping for their sins. If young people wish to form quartets and choruses, and then desire an outlet for their energies, then let them “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” especially to those creatures who have never heard.

The lost can be found all about us—in jails, hospitals, almshouses, on city streets, in city parks, etc.

4. Give first place to spiritual preparation for all participation in Christian song. No congregation can sing either to the glory of God or to each other’s benefit unless its members have first been filled by the Spirit and Word of God (Eph. 5:18, 19; Col. 3:16). No group can go forth and sing to the lost, and expect anyone to be saved, unless the singers are endowed with power from on high (Luke 24:48, 49; Acts 1:8).

Singing will have to be thought of as something much more than a way of calling people together, filling in time, or providing for a little change during a tedious program. It is a spiritual exercise involving the highest spiritual relationships with fellow-Christians and with God who is a Spirit and must be worshiped “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24; cf. 1 Cor. 15:15).

Song leaders will need to be deeply spiritual men who are able not merely to set the pitch and beat the time but above all to lead the congregation in an awareness of the Godward and deeply inward sentiments they express in spiritual song.

Music teachers are needed who cannot only teach rudiments, but also develop an appreciation of the spiritual aspects of Christian song, so that singers will be more interested in worship and testimony through song than in musical accomplishment.

If local congregations have already decided at certain times they would rather have a few select persons do the singing for the purpose of edifying the rest,* then let them choose such persons as are so deeply spiritual that they have something to share with the rest. There is no reason in the world why special singers should not be required

* It dare not be for worship—the day of vicarious worship is past. 1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10; Rev. 5:10.

to meet the same standards of spirituality, consecration, and loyalty to Christ and the church which we require for Sunday-school teachers and officers, or for ministers and other speakers and leaders. There is nothing in the charm of beautiful music that will make up for a spiritual lack in the life of the singer. It is far more spiritually strengthening to hear and join in congregational singing of mediocre quality, than to listen to beautiful singing by unspiritual, worldly persons, who may be attired in such a way as to divert minds far from the things of the Spirit.

God grant us a gracious reviving that from every heart may burst forth such a tide of spiritual song as will win the

lost, build up the saints, and glorify Him who has called us out of darkness into light that we might show forth His praises!

O sing unto the Lord a new song:
Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.
Sing unto the Lord, bless his name;
Shew forth his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the heathen,
His wonders among all people,
O magnify the Lord with me,
And let us exalt his name together!

—Psalm 96:1-3; 34:3.

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TRUTH, FICTION, and the Rise to Popularity of *The Da Vinci Code*

by Chris Bryan

*Feminists cheer. Conservative Christians jeer. And many are asking,
“Could the things spoken of in this book be true?”*

The book, of course, is *The Da Vinci Code*. It debuted as number one on the *New York Times Best-Seller List for Hardcover Fiction* and remained there for 14 weeks. The book has continued to be listed in the top-five bestsellers for the past 80 weeks as of the writing of this article. Columbia Pictures has secured rights to the story and will produce a movie of the book scheduled for release in 2005. All of this means that *The Da Vinci Code* has sold over seven million copies and is being translated into more than 40 languages. Reaction has spawned websites, television interviews, and countless discussion groups. At least a dozen books have been written in response to its claims, including a study guide written by the author himself.

In a culture where truth has become relative, author Dan Brown paints an appealing picture of a 2000-year-old conspiracy to suppress the truth, and challenges the historical teachings of Christianity that millions of its readers profess to hold dear. Yet the book remains wildly popular. Is its popularity limited to hype and controversy? Wherein lies its appeal? Does it reflect Biblical truth? What ways is it in error? It is easy to applaud and easy to attack, but it takes effort and patience to sift

fact from fiction—but not that much effort. In fact, I was able to satisfy most of my questions within the first two critiques I read.*

Uncovering the Appeal

A good mystery leaves the reader asking, “Whodunit?,” until its final pages. It builds suspense and tempts the reader to draw false conclusions. Lovers of the mystery genre are by-and-large patient and observant readers, attentive to detail, working to solve the puzzle before its solution is revealed. So how, in this Information Age of rapid images and brief phrases, when the average attention span is rapidly decreasing, does an author catch and hold the readers’ interest through a book like *The Da Vinci Code*?

Readers are drawn into *The Da Vinci Code* with short chapters, averaging less than five pages in length, that end with unresolved tension or “cliff-hangers.” Brown uses this technique to encourage a sense of urgency and expectancy in the reader. One gets the feeling that an impending revelation is always about to emerge. As for clues, the author drops enough crumbs for an army of Hansels and Gretels, which build a sense of confidence in the reader, who is given the

* The author would like to recommend two critiques that he found helpful in preparing this article: Darrell L. Bock, *Breaking The Da Vinci Code*, (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books) 2004. Carl E. Olson and Sandra Miesel; *The Da Vinci Hoax*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press) 2004.

tools to “figure it out” before the characters themselves are able to solve the mystery. Brown skillfully maintains multiple plot lines, keeping each plate spinning by revisiting each character’s situation frequently. All of this lends to the appeal of a book that in a very real sense, reads like television.

In addition to his skill with literary form, Dan Brown has done his homework. He creatively incorporates the diverse disciplines of art history, linguistics, mathematics, cryptology, symbology, forensic science, religion, and the occult, in a manner that bespeaks careful research. The average reader will walk away feeling cleverly armed with new trivia to amuse his or her friends. What drives the effectiveness of this synthesis is Brown’s compelling use of real-world detail. Again, due to the nature of the Information Age, the average reader has ready access to small amounts of knowledge about a great many topics. The author uses this to his advantage to make the reader feel sophisticated, knowledgeable, and cosmopolitan. In doing so, Brown appeals to icons of popular culture: the Mona Lisa, Vitruvian Man, the Louvre and other popular tourist destinations—objects and places with which people will recognize and connect. Despite the variety of subjects he covers, Brown fashions a cohesive rationale that ties up many apparent loose ends and leaves the reader with a sense of, “Oh, so that explains it.”

Dan Brown knows his audience. Through his characters, he communicates a deep respect for learning, especially higher education, which resonates with well-educated readers. Brown appeals to the culturally initiated: those who see themselves as “enlightened” or “cognoscenti” and he uses this to gain their sympathy and interest. He expresses a positive desire to correct a historically unjust view of the role of women and his story line promotes a view of the interconnectedness of all cul-

tures.

Additionally, Brown’s conspiracy theory appeals to the modern appetite for scandal. In an era where 24-hour news channels vie for ratings, he plugs in to the mistrust and disillusionment latent in the Baby-Boomer generation. Indeed, authority figures in the book such as the French police, the Vatican, and even a Swiss banker are often portrayed as unjust manipulators of power. Throughout the book the plot is underscored with deep questions: “What are the treasures we pursue?” “What would happen if we discovered they are not what we think they are?” “What truths are right before our eyes, but we fail to see them?” “How have we blinded ourselves?” “Have we been told the truth?” “Is someone treating us unjustly?”

Affirming Worthy Themes

In addition to his God-given skill as a writer who is sensitive to his audience, there is much for the Christian to admire and affirm in Brown’s work. He appeals to a sense of history. The reader is encouraged to consider that humanity has a common story, a common connection. And he asks what would happen if the hidden truths of our history were revealed. Until its end, the story is driven by the pursuit for truth and a desperate quest to reveal what has long been hidden, before time runs out. These are the same themes that are reflected in Biblical teaching. As Christians, we believe all people have a common story. Additionally, the Bible teaches that God revealed Himself in Christ, and that in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. Christians stand for truth. And what is evangelism if not a mission to reveal the truth before time runs out?

The juxtaposition of historical wisdom and modern ignorance is another of Brown’s main themes. He contrasts the beautiful historic building of the Louvre with its ugly modern pyramid entrance,

made of glass and steel. He contrasts the incredible skill and subtlety of Renaissance paintings with the high-tech methods and gadgetry of forensic work. And he contrasts the “wisdom” of ancient pagan religions with the alleged corruption and compromise of the modern Catholic Church. With the exception of his elevation of pagan religions, the Christian can affirm the author’s appeal to historical wisdom. For the past 200

Additionally, Christians can affirm the story’s portrayal of the desire for justice.

years of human history, society’s view of the value of things historical has depreciated with our inflating infatuation with the “modern,” but the Bible reveals we are a people with a past, and our understanding of that past matters, because we are part of the story.

Additionally, Christians can affirm the story’s portrayal of the desire for justice. The first chapter begins with the murder of an unarmed man. The French Police pursue the main characters as suspects in this murder even though they are innocent. The parents of the main female character, Sophie, were brutally murdered in her childhood. And Mary Magdalene, who takes on mythic proportions in this book as the “sacred feminine,” is presented as having been maligned by the Catholic Church as a prostitute. Yet in the end, justice is achieved for many of the characters. The true murderer becomes a self-sacrificial person who dies knowing forgiveness in his heart. The suspected villain turns out to be a dupe and is restored to his proper standing. The issue with Mary Magdalene, which is a main sticking point of the controversy surrounding the book, can also be seen from the perspective of justice. The

story presents Mary Magdalene as one who has been treated unjustly. While Christians can affirm a desire for proper justice, we must respectfully disagree that this woman of the Scriptures has been treated unfairly.

Inappropriate Mixing of Fact and Fiction

The issues surrounding Mary Magdalene and her “true” identity (i.e., Jesus’ wife, mother of His children, and the “sacred feminine”), brings me to point out the areas where we must take exception to this book as followers of Christ. Brown’s treatment of truth claims has a damaging effect on readers’ confidence in historical fact. Though the book is admittedly a work of fiction, it gives the impression of portraying its facts accurately, in the same way that readers might trust a John Grisham novel to accurately describe the role of a lawyer in the legal process. Prior to the introduction there is a disclaimer page which, if not read carefully, would seem to indicate that all of the historical facts and religious ceremonies referred to within the text are true. This is further evidence of Brown’s skill as a storyteller. Stories become much more engaging if the reader thinks they could be true. However, by his suggestion, Brown blurs the distinction between fact and fiction, specifically the question of which ideas are factual and which ideas are fictional, thus planting a seed of doubt in the readers. This doubt is expanded further when the character Teabing says, “The winners in history are usually the ones who write the history we read.” This begs the question, What history can be trusted?

As the story progresses there are many references to actual historical occurrences: For example the Council of Nicea and the service of the Knights Templar. But many of these truths are presented out of context, and are

assigned new meaning against a fictional background. The Council of Nicea, which in actual history met in 323 A.D. to denounce a heresy that denied the deity of Christ, in Brown's history becomes the source of a cover-up whereby the Church deified the human teacher Jesus and declared His teachings infallible (the Bible) for the purpose of denying the "true" identity and role of Mary Magdalene. The Knights Templar, who in actual history guarded Jerusalem and provided protective escort for religious pilgrims, in Brown's history become secret guardians of the Holy Grail. The legend of the Grail itself is changed so that the Holy Grail becomes the body and documents of Mary Magdalene, and the Knights (who in reality suffered a tragic end) in Brown's story bequeath their secret over the centuries through secret societies (notably, the Priory of Scion, membership of which included Leonardo Da Vinci and other famous figures).

This is no doubt familiar territory for readers acquainted with the teachings of the Freemasons, who claim to be able to trace the genealogy, or "Rose Line" of the descendants of the union of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. This idea also plays a central role in Brown's story, where ultimately Sophie, the main female character, discovers she is of the line of Christ. Though the rumor of a union between Jesus and Mary Magdalene is indeed ancient, it has never been substantiated and the weight of actual historic evidence is against it. These are only a few of the many examples where actual events and true facts are reinterpreted (through the characters) for the purpose of the story. The overall effect is engaging because, by displacing familiar history, Brown invites his reader to rely on the cogent reinterpretations of his characters, who appear genuinely concerned with the truth.

Indeed, the search for truth is one of the driving themes of the book. Brown's

novel engages the reader by following the main characters on a suspenseful and dangerous quest to find and reveal the "true" identity of the Holy Grail. Until the final chapters, it would seem as if the entire book was focused toward one aim: revelation of truth. The general thrust is that, regardless of the cost, the human race must be disabused of its mass delusion, but ironically, this is not where Brown leads us. Following the climax of the book, the actual discovery of the "Holy Grail," there is a profound anticlimax where the hero Langdon decides not to reveal the truth, reasoning that, "Religious allegory has become a part of the fabric of reality. And living in that reality helps millions of people cope and be better people" (342).

A Disturbing End to the Quest

In essence, *The Da Vinci Code* raises questions it is not willing to answer. It undermines the true identity of Christ and the authority and authenticity of the Bible as Scripture, then dumps the reader off on the side of the road in the confusing swamp of relativism. This might actually be comforting if Brown had not taken such effort throughout the book to develop a detailed alternative to Biblical Christianity. And yet, there is an honesty here that addresses our culture where it is, acknowledging our doubts and recognizing our resistance and disagreement regarding claims of authority. It certainly explains how a book that seems to make such

Brown blurs the distinction between fact and fiction . . .

radical claims can still be popular in a culture where truth is relative. And it explains how this book can even be popular among those who claim Biblical faith! Had Dan Brown brought his novel to a definite (moral) conclusion, he might have alienated part of his

readership. As it is, he leaves readers the freedom to believe in the way that each finds most pragmatic and helpful. As a Christian, I must respectfully disagree with this position, both because it leads people (whether intentionally or unintentionally) to doubt the existence of truth, and because it presupposes people really are better off not knowing the truth.

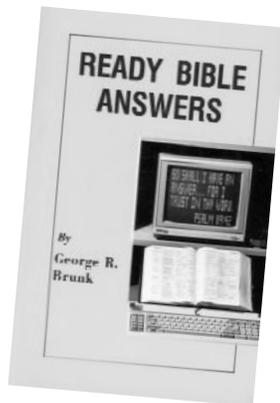
So while *The Da Vinci Code* teaches us much about our day and age, its treatment of truth is not a pattern Christians can follow. It may be tantalizing to believe a great scandal has been uncovered, and of course it is worthwhile to pursue truth; but Christians must seek not only to draw people into the quest for truth but also to help them find freedom in the truth. God has

given us a place to land in our quest for truth which is ultimately found in His Son Jesus. As Francis Schaeffer said, we may not know fully, that is know every last aspect of the mind of God, but we can know truly. At the end of the day, people need to see that the truth claims of Christianity can both stand up to historical questions and address the deepest human needs. In our day and in every age, people do not need freedom from the truth but rather to be liberated by the truth. Such liberty comes from knowing the truth and living within it. For Jesus, in whom can be found no falsehood, encouraged true followers saying, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). ■

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Ready Bible Answers

by Geo. R. Brunk I



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Pragmatically Speaking, Cohabitation Is Bad

by Haven Bradford Gow

In his book *Living Together* (Kregel), pastor and counselor Rev. Jeff Van Goethem points out that “more than half of all first marriages are now preceded by cohabitation, and more than one-third of cohabitating-couple households have children present . . . it appears that cohabitation has evolved over the last few decades from something called ‘living in sin’ to something accepted by modern society. The link between marriage and sex has certainly been broken.”

As Catholic scholar Francis Agnew, pastor, Our Lady of Victory Church, Perryville, MO, notes, “Statistics show that half of all marriages in this country now fail. But the rate of failure in the marriages of those who have lived together before marriage is much higher. One expert claims an 85 percent failure rate, another that the arrangement represents an 80 percent higher risk of divorce.” Moreover, these studies are “the findings of social scientists attempting to establish and assess facts by the methods of strictly scientific investigation.”

According to the authors of *Cultivating Heart and Character* (Character Development Publishing, Box 9211, Chapel Hill, NC), cohabitation contributes to attitudes and habits that are destructive of marriage: “Sexual involvement without lifetime commitment . . . frustrates the desire for authentic oneness. It can bond people who do not belong together, creating a false intimacy that deceives them into investing time and energy that would

be better spent elsewhere. It can eclipse other means of relationship building and communication, eroding the basis for sustaining the relationship long-term. It can aggravate the tendency of immature couples to draw inward and neglect other people and responsibilities as well as other growth-promoting relationships and activities.” Therefore, “Uncommitted sex carries a host of hazards for the relationship as well as the individuals involved.”

According to family counselor Dr. Gary Smalley, author, *Making Love Last Forever* (Word Publishing), James Likoudis, president emeritus, Catholics United for the Faith; and Pierre Lachance, Catholic scholar-educator, Fall River, Mass., premarital sex and living together destroy the moral, spiritual, and psychological foundations for a happy, successful, and enduring marriage; they furnish these reasons for practicing purity and rejecting premarital sex:

Premarital sex reinforces selfishness and deters us from emphasizing love for God and others; it hinders our awareness of the needs and feelings of others, especially our future spouses and/or good friends; it makes us vulnerable to sexual diseases and the possibility of sexual addiction; it enhances the possibility of guilt, resentment, and the feeling of being used and abused; it can lead to unwanted pregnancies and also to abortions.

Clearly, then, we must help young persons recognize they possess the

God-given ability to preserve purity of heart, mind, and soul so they can understand and practice the meaning of true love. As Mother Teresa noted in her Harvard University commencement address, the most lovely gift a young man can give a young lady, and a

young lady a young man, is a virgin heart, a virgin soul. For, as Christ observed in the New Testament, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." ■

Mr. Gow is a commentator and writer from Greenville, MS.

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Are Fossils the Result of Noah's Flood?

by John D. Morris, Ph.D.

Fossils have been frequently cited as the main evidence for evolution. The evolution/uniformitarian worldview postulates that the slow and gradual processes we see operating today are responsible not only for the death and extinction of plant and animal types but their burial in sediments which will eventually harden into sedimentary rocks. Uniformity's slogan, "the present is the key to the past," reflects their view of the origin of the features in the rock and fossil record. I think the great Flood of Noah's day is a better explanation.

First, note that very few fossils are forming today and then only in the case of rapid burial by water. For instance what happens to a fish when it dies? It either floats to the surface or sinks to the bottom where it decays and is eaten by scavengers. Yet many fish fossils are so exquisitely preserved that even the scales and organs are preserved. Obviously there was no time for decay and bacterial action. We can certainly say that something extraordinary happened to form the fossils.

Furthermore, most fossils occur in huge fossil graveyards where things from different habitats are mixed together in a watery grave. The predominant type of fossil is that of marine invertebrates but these are found on the continents within catastrophically deposited rock units.

Of the several different kinds of fossils, each one requires rapid burial and circumstances which are seldom, if ever, at work today. Processes of fertilization include:

Mineralization: This happens by partial or entire replacement of an organization by minerals, usually one mole-

cule at a time as the organism decays. Time is involved but not time before burial. Petrification occurs when the replacing mineral is silica.

Carbonization: Living things consist of high carbon content, and under extraordinary circumstances only the carbon remains. This includes the thick coal bands as well as thin carbon residues left in the host rock. Rapid isolation and heating is required.

Impressions: These common fossils occur when the entire organism is replaced by the same material as the host rock leaving only the form of an organism. The detail preserved indicates no time for decay.

Ephemeral markings: These common markings include worm burrows, animal tracks, coprolites, and rain-drop impressions. All are extremely fragile and need rapid lithification to be preserved.

Hard parts: Bones and shells are found but these are usually broken. For instance, limbs ripped from dinosaurs, found in fossil graveyards, are the rule.

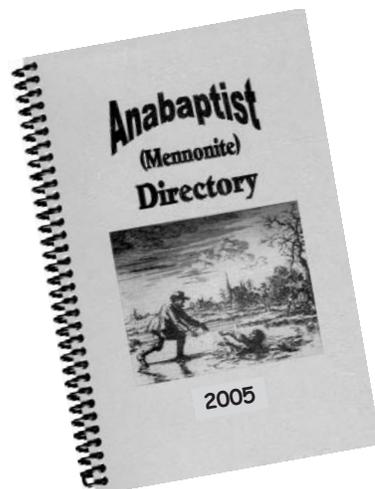
Soft parts: Obviously these will last for only a very short time without rapid burial. These include flesh, feathers, skin, scales, plant tissue, color, and even smell.

Frozen parts: These imply extremely low temperatures which trapped and froze the organisms quickly. Certainly this is not happening now on any scale.

These fossil types (and other subcategories could be mentioned) require extraordinary circumstances of a rapid and catastrophic nature. The great Flood of Noah's day which destroyed a world full of life is the best explanation. ■

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