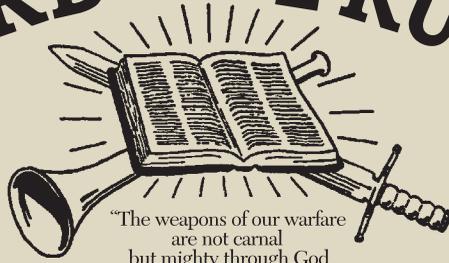


# The SWORD and TRUMPET

“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*



MICHAEL S. ZEHR

FEBRUARY 2006

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# The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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

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# Person of the Month:

## Michael S. Zehr (1872-1944)

Born in Waterloo County, Ontario, Canada, November 7, 1872, Michael S. Zehr was the third son of Christian B. and Veronica Schultz Zehr.

He was converted to Christ as a young person and subsequently joined the Maple View congregation near Wellesley, Ontario.

Michael was an industrious young man with a good head on his shoulders. He proved early on that he could make decisions and carry them through to completion. His father, apparently sensing these admirable qualities in his son, offered Michael a sum of money as a loan, which was to be used to plan his future as he saw fit. This was unusual since Zehr was still relatively young. Michael then moved to the United States and began working as a hired man. Christian Zehr's trust in his son's sense of responsibility was not misplaced. Michael paid off his loan to his father much sooner than expected.

On November 29, 1894, at the age of 22, Michael was married to a young woman whose last name was also Zehr. The newlyweds apparently made their home in Croghan, NY, because six years later they left Croghan and moved to Huron County, Michigan. The Lord blessed them with only one daughter but they opened their home to many other children throughout their married life. Their home was always an open and friendly place for the "known" as well as the "unknown." After the Zehrs' arrival in Michigan other families followed. This resulted in the establishment of the congregation in Pigeon River. Full of zeal and always willing to help, Michael organized the church's Sunday school, becoming its first superintendent. Zehr was also a member of the Board of Trustees when the church was built in 1903.

Two years later, on September 22, 1905, at the age of 33, Brother Zehr was ordained as a minister of the Gospel at Pigeon River.

Michael had a great interest and zeal for missions and was actively involved in mission endeavors, laboring on two different occasions in the Ozarks of Dent County, Missouri. He saw the need of getting believers involved in missions while they were still teenagers. A willing worker, he would work right alongside of them. He was particularly burdened to get the Gospel message out to those who had never heard, regardless of their environment or station in life. During his ministry mission, congregations were also begun in the surrounding home area.

On November 30, 1930, he was again ordained: this time as bishop.

*(continued on page 12)*

# The Bible: Truth Without Error

by Charles C. Ryrie

Every generation has its doctrinal problems and those which have arisen today in the area of the Bible are serious, since they touch the basis of the authority and the truth of our faith.

One of the most important contemporary problems concerns the inerrancy of the Scriptures. *Inerrant* means “exempt from error,” and dictionaries consider it a synonym for *infallible* which means “not liable to deceive, certain.” Actually there is little difference in the meaning of the two words, although in the history of their use in relation to the Bible, *inerrant* is of much more recent use. If there is any difference in the shade of meaning it is simply this: *infallible* includes the resultant idea of trustworthiness while *inerrant* emphasizes principally the truthfulness of the Scriptures.

## *History of the Doctrine*

A survey of the history of the doctrine of inerrancy shows that the discussions concerning its importance belong to the modern period. The fathers accepted the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures as an assumed and self-evident fact. Scripture was used to prove the deity of Christ, for instance, in the early debates over this doctrine. Origen (A.D. 185-254) constantly referred to the Scripture as final authority in his controversy with Celsus. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) has a clear statement concerning inerrancy: “For I confess to your charity that I have learned to defer this respect and honor to those Scriptural books only which are now called canonical, that I believe most firmly that no one of those authors has erred in any respect in writing.”<sup>1</sup>

The medieval period saw little development in this area of doctrine. Interest was centered “in defining the status of

the Bible in relation to that of other authorities in the Church.”<sup>2</sup> Abelard expressed doubt as to the inerrancy of the text, though generally a high view of inspiration was held by most.

It was the Protestant Reformers who gave proper emphasis to the doctrines of inspiration and infallibility. And yet these did not occupy a large place in their writings. It seems that they realized the importance of these truths as the basis for true authority against the claim to authority of the Roman church, and yet they were so convinced of these truths that they could take them for granted rather than spending time in a systematic development and defense of these doctrines. Calvin referred to the Scriptures as the “sure and infallible record”<sup>3</sup> and the “unerring standard.”<sup>4</sup> Luther declared in no uncertain terms: “The Scriptures have never erred,”<sup>5</sup> and “It is impossible that Scripture should contradict itself; it appears so only to the senseless and obstinate hypocrites.”<sup>6</sup>

It has been in the modern period that the doctrine has of necessity had to be developed. The rationalistic attacks on the reliability of historical matters with a subsequent questioning of the authenticity of the text of Scripture were a denial of inerrancy and a rejection of inspiration. It is important to notice that the two doctrines—inerrancy and inspiration—fell together under these attacks. Thus a new theory of inspiration arose which recognized the inspiration of certain truths in general and insofar as they conformed to natural reason. The doctrines of human fallibility in the production of Scripture and the infallibility of human reason in the interpretation of Scripture had gained the day.

But God had prepared others to expound and defend the truth. What the church owes to men like Hodge and Warfield can scarcely be measured. Their writings on these matters concerning inspiration are still classics. Recently, and in their train, *Thy Word Is Truth* by Edward J. Young ably presents and defends verbal inspiration and inerrancy. More recently Harold Lindsell in his book *Battle for the Bible* has warned the church about what to expect when inerrancy is abandoned.

### ***Modern Views of the Doctrine***

The liberal attack which substituted an inspired experience for an inspired text was soon followed by the neoorthodox attack. Neoorthodoxy was in turn followed (but not supplanted) by neoliberalism. There are similarities between these “new” schools of thought particularly in relation to their views of the Scriptures. Both believe that the Scriptures are at best a fallible witness to revelation (which may have been infallible when it left God but which certainly was corrupted by the time it was recorded in the Bible). Obviously what you choose to guide your life with from this fallible record is up to you, and the entire approach to the worthwhileness of the Scriptures becomes completely subjective. Both believe that revelation cannot be given in propositional truth but only in one’s personal encounter with God.

The neoorthodox attempts to rescue from this maze of subjectivity some remnant of authority for the Bible in saying that it does witness (however fallibly) to Christ who is THE revelation of God. But how can one expect to have a true encounter based on, or at least aided by, a false witness? Authority, under these conditions, not only does not reside in the Bible, but also in reality does not even reside in Christ (the witness to whom may be mistaken). Actually it comes to reside in the individual reader’s opinion of the particular portion of the Bible

which he is reading at the time. The attacks of both neoorthodoxy and neoliberalism have been against verbal inspiration and that which is included in it—inerrancy, for the proponents apparently realize that the two stand together.

With great sorrow one notices a tendency among some conservatives to attempt to divorce inerrancy from verbal inspiration. Some because of apparent difficulties in the Bible (such as historical and chronological problems) are concluding that certain sections are not inerrant though inspired. One hears more and more these days: “I believe the Bible is inspired, but I cannot believe that it is without error.” Inspiration, yes; inerrancy, no.

### ***The Importance of the Doctrine***

The importance of biblical inerrancy can best be seen in its relationships.

*In relation to the character of God.* We believe God’s Word to be infallible simply because God Himself is infallible. God is true (John 3:33; 17:3; Rom. 3:4; 1 Thess. 1:9), and since the Scriptures are “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16), they must also be true. “What Scripture says is to be received as the infallible Word of the infallible God, and to assert biblical inerrancy and infallibility is just to confess faith in (i) the divine origin of the Bible and (ii) the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God.”<sup>7</sup> But, the critics say, fallible men have corrupted what originally came from God in perfect form. Certainly, this need not be true, for God is fully able to preserve the record of His revelation inerrant. Only an examination of the biblical evidence itself can determine whether or not there are errors, but it is more plausible that the God of truth and power would preserve the record without error. “Revelation is but half revelation unless it be infallibly communicated; it is but half communicated unless it be infallibly recorded.”<sup>8</sup> Men were used but they were used by being borne along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 2:21). This is what

kept the record from error even though fallible men were used in producing it.

*In relation to inspiration.* A full and high view of inspiration requires inerrancy as a natural and necessary part of it. Errancy and inspiration are incompatible. “The real reason why men oppose the doctrine of an infallible Scripture is that they are not willing to embrace the biblical doctrine of inspiration. There is no such thing as inspiration which does not carry with it the correlate of infallibility. A Bible that is fallible—and we speak of course of the original—is a Bible that is not inspired. A Bible that is inspired is a Bible that is infallible. There is no middle ground.”<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes in an attempt to preserve inspiration without infallibility, the latter is limited to matters of “faith and practice.” In other words, the Bible is infallibly inspired in doctrinal areas which concern the Christian’s faith and life, but in “lesser” matters it is only inspired but not inerrant. It is popular today, for instance, to exclude the area of scientific matters from infallibility. “The Bible is not a textbook of science” is the cry. While this is true, such a statement should not be used to deceive people into thinking that when the Bible speaks on a matter that is in the area of science it may be in error. Although the Bible is not a textbook of science, when it records a scientific fact it speaks of that fact with infallible authority just the same as with matters of “faith and practice.” If there are these parts of the Bible which are not inerrant, then the question properly arises, who decides which parts are true and which parts are erroneous? One cannot hold to inspiration and infallibility of certain parts and only the inspiration of other parts.

*In relation to the Bible’s witness concerning itself.* The Bible witnesses to its own infallibility. Obviously, if it is not infallible, it bears a false witness, and cannot be surely trusted in any of the matters on which it speaks. Its inerrancy, therefore, is vital to its own claims.

*In relation to authority.* As stated above, the authority of the Bible is under attack today by those who charge that such authority is the authority of a “paper pope.” Instead, they say, authority is in Christ, not the Bible, for God’s Word must not be “petrified in a dead record.”<sup>10</sup> This is such a super-pious statement that it apparently cannot be questioned. But questioned it must be, for how can Christ have any authority if the witness to Him (the Bible) is not infallible? And if it is infallible, then it has authority too.

There is no other way of knowing about Christ and His authority except through the Bible. If the Bible is subject to error, then conceivably and very likely one of those errors concerns our knowledge of Him. It may concern His supernatural origin, or His deity, or His teachings, or His Resurrection. And if in every detail He is not all that He claimed to be (and we would have our doubts if the witness to His claims is not inerrant), then what authority does that kind of person have?

Both the authority of Christ and the authority of the Scriptures depend on the inerrancy of the Scriptures, for statements that are not completely true cannot be absolutely authoritative. Furthermore, parts of the Bible cannot be true and thus authoritative while other parts are not. It is not a book that is authoritative only in matters of “faith and practice.” Warfield correctly observed: “The authority which cannot assure of a hard fact is soon not trusted for a hard doctrine.”<sup>11</sup>

### ***The Proof of the Doctrine***

Briefly summarized the proof of the doctrine of inerrancy involves four concepts.

*It involves the witness of Scripture to its own inerrancy.* Is this a valid witness? Yes, for everyone has the right to speak for himself, and indeed there are some things that would never be known if the one involved did not speak for himself.<sup>12</sup>

There are three classes of scriptural references that testify to inerrancy. The first is the class of verses which affirm the truthfulness of God (cf. above *In relation to the character of God*). These testify to the truthfulness of the communication of His revelation. The second involves verses which emphasize the abiding character of the complete Scriptures.

Our Lord declared clearly that He believed in the abiding character of the letters which spell the words of Scripture: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). A *jot* is the Hebrew letter *yod*, the smallest letter in that alphabet. It looks much like an English apostrophe. The word *tittle* means a minor stroke and refers to the almost unnoticeable strokes which distinguish certain Hebrew letters from others. For instance, the tittle that differentiates a *d* (*daleth*) from an *r* (*resh*) is a protrusion that in a normal font of type would not be more than 1/16 of an inch. Of course the presence or absence of the tittle would change the spelling of a word and likely change the meaning. The Lord was emphasizing that every letter of every word is important, and what those words say in sentences and paragraphs is completely accurate. In fact they can be depended on to be fulfilled exactly as spelled out letter by letter and word by word in all the promises of the Old Testament. Such a specific statement by our Lord would have no meaning if the Scripture were subject to errors in the text.

John 10:33-36 is another passage where the Lord states that the Scripture cannot be broken. This is an assertion that the entire Scripture cannot be broken and that the particular words being quoted on that occasion cannot be broken. This is only possible because the Scripture is true in each particular and in all its parts.

The third class of Scriptures contains those in which an argument is based on a

word or a form of a word. Of course, if the Bible is not inerrant such arguments cease to be of any weight. When answering the Sadducees the Lord based His argument on the present tense of the verb *to be* (Matt. 22:32). The question was concerning whose wife a woman would be in the resurrection since she had seven legitimate husbands during her lifetime on earth. The Lord said that the Sadducees did not know the Scriptures nor the power of God. Then to reinforce the doctrine of resurrection He reminded them that God is the God of the living. He proved this by pointing out the fact that God identified Himself to Moses by saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." If resurrection were not a fact, then He should have said, "I was the God of Abraham. . . ." But hundreds of years after their death He said that He still was their God, implying that though Abraham and Isaac and Jacob had experienced physical death, they still existed.

Perhaps the force of what Christ was saying can be illustrated this way. If a couple had four children, and one had died they could answer the question, "How many children do you have?" in at least two ways. Their first reply might be, "We have four; three on earth and one in heaven." From that answer you know that they believe in the doctrine of resurrection—although one child had died they still considered that child alive in heaven. If, on the other hand, the reply to the same question is, "We *had* four, but only three are living," then you do not know whether or not they believe in resurrection. The difference is shown, of course, in the tense of the verb: "we have," or "we had"; "I am," or "I was." The Sadducees apparently understood the point of Christ's argument. If the words of Scripture are not accurate, then an argument like this would be meaningless.

In questioning the Pharisees Christ made His point with the single word *Lord* (Matt. 22:43-45) as quoted from Psalm

110:1. Christ was trying to make the Pharisees see that the Son of David was also the Lord of David; i.e., that Messiah was both David's human descendant and his divine Lord. Again, if Christ did not consider the words to be accurate then the argument would have been meaningless. Paul's argument in Galatians 3 is based on the singular form of the word *seed* in contrast to the plural (v. 16). None of these arguments is valid unless tenses, words, and singulars and plurals are to be trusted. And they cannot be trusted apart from inerrancy.

*It involves a proper concept of communication.* Hodge has best stated this argument as follows: "Men think in words, and the more definitely they think the more are their thoughts immediately associated with an exactly appropriate verbal expression. Infallibility of thought cannot be secured or preserved independently of an infallible verbal rendering."<sup>13</sup>

*It involves the analogy of Christ.* Frequently the objection is raised, How can the Bible be without error since all the writings came through the instruments of men who are fallible? The answer to this involves an analogy with the person of Christ. It might be objected that the person of Christ cannot be sinless because humanity is sinful. But the person of Christ is sinless because humanity is not necessarily per se sinful. The first man was created sinless and our Lord took upon Himself the *form* of sinful flesh, but not sinful flesh. Sinfulness is not necessary to humanity; indeed the pattern of real humanity is not to be found in the universal examples of fallen men around us. Likewise, fallibility is not a necessary part of the result of man's being used to convey God's revelation. Usually man does corrupt whatever he touches, but this need not be so, and it was not so in the giving of the Scriptures.

*It involves faith.* No one who holds to inerrancy denies that there are problems. Nor does he deny that fully satisfactory solutions have not been found to all the

problems. But, accepting the witness of Scripture to its own inerrancy, when he meets a problem for which he presently has no solution, he places his trust in the Scriptures rather than his fallible mind. After all, the Bible has proved its reliability in many ways and in many areas, and it is worthy of our trust. Man's knowledge has often proved unreliable and at best it is limited. "It is indeed true that we should not close our minds and researches to the ever-progressing resolution of difficulties under the illumination of the Spirit of truth, but those whose approach to faith is that of resolution of all difficulty have deserted the very nature of faith and of its ground."<sup>14</sup> Even though the problems connected with apparent discrepancies, parallel passages, manner of quotation, absence of original autographs, etc., may not yet have been fully solved, neither have they ever been conclusively demonstrated to contain errors. In the meantime they are proper subjects for reverent, scholarly investigation, but a reverence that includes a proper faith in the God of truth and His inerrant record of that truth. ■

#### ENDNOTES

1. *Epistolae*, 82, i, 3.
2. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, "Church Doctrine of Inspiration," *Revelation and the Bible*, p. 209.
3. *Job*, p. 744.
4. *Institutes*, I, 149.
5. *Luther's Works* (St. Louis Edition), XV: 1481.
6. *Ibid.*, IX: 356.
7. J. I. Packer, "*Fundamentalism*" and the Word of God, pp. 95-96.
8. B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 442.
9. Edward J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*, pp. 108-9.
10. J. K. S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture*, p. 279.
11. Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, p. 181.
12. Cf. Alan M. Stibbs, "Witness of Scripture to Its Inspiration," *Revelation and the Bible*, pp. 108-9.
13. A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, p. 67.
14. John Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," *The Infallible Word*, p. 7.

—Single copies of the booklet "The Bible: Truth Without Error" are distributed free as part of the ministry of Dallas Theological Seminary, 3909 Swiss Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75204. Additional copies may be secured from the Seminary for \$.10 per copy.

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



Paul M. Emerson

# **The Shepherd's Institute 2005**

The Shepherd's Institute, to which we have often referred in this column, has completed its first session. After much prayer, planning, and consideration, the initial classes in Servant Leadership, Expository Preaching, Anabaptist History and Theology, and Old Testament Survey were taught October 31 through November 4, 2005. For those taking the courses for credit, assignments will continue through the winter. The Institute was hosted this time by the Fair Haven and Woodlawn Amish Mennonite congregations of Goshen, Indiana. Fifteen ministers were enrolled in the day classes with approximately eighty attending the evening classes. From all involved,

strong support and appreciation has been expressed.

We urge our constituency to support this ongoing effort to provide in-service training for ministers. Our ministers need the encouragement and stimulation that The Shepherd's Institute provides. Ministers, please seriously consider this opportunity. Parishioners, help make it possible for your ministers to attend.

The next sessions are planned for north-central Ohio, March 6-10, 2006. For more information, contact the Institute Dean, Marcus Yoder, at 24679 New Guilford Road, Martinsburg, OH 43037. Phone: (740) 668-2801. Email: [marcusyoder1@juno.com](mailto:marcusyoder1@juno.com).

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



*A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**FEBRUARY 5, 2006**

## *The Value of Christian Heritage*

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Paul the aged, now a prisoner in Rome, writes this last epistle to his dear son in the faith, Timothy. The thrust of the letter is several-fold: urging Timothy to come to him in prison (see 4:9, 21); encouraging Timothy in his role of leadership in the church at Ephesus, and expressing his concern for the ongoing stability of the church. Paul realized his time on earth was now short (4:6), and he needed the encouragement of his dear friend and co-worker. He is also concerned that the work to which he had given his life should not suffer defeat. (See 3:1-7.)

As Paul sits there in the dungeon in Rome, his thoughts run in many directions. Here in this first chapter of his second letter to Timothy, he reflects on their long-standing relationship and years of service as co-workers. Paul not only thinks about Timothy and prays for him daily, but he longs to see him again. That, he says, would fill him with joy.

As Paul reflects on their friendship he recalls with fondness Timothy's outstanding faith, and the source of that faith. Though Timothy was the son of a mixed marriage, his faithful mother and grandmother left a strong spiritual influence in his life. Paul encourages Timothy to stir up, or fan into flame, the spiritual gift which he had received from God and was affirmed by the laying on of Paul's hands.

(See 1 Timothy 4:12-16.)

Paul encourages boldness and fearlessness in the discharge of duty. He also encourages Timothy to not be ashamed of him as a prisoner but to also be willing to suffer for the cause of Christ if necessary.

Paul then launches into a statement of God's saving grace through our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, which plan was formed before the world began. (See Ephesians 1:4; Titus 1:2, 3). That long-ago plan of God was implemented by the appearing of Jesus Christ who, through His death, conquered death and has given life to those who accept His work by faith. Of that message, Paul says, I have been appointed a messenger to the Gentiles.

Paul also acknowledges that it is because of his ministry of the gospel that he is now in chains. But, he says, I am not ashamed, neither of the gospel (Romans 1:16), nor of these bonds. Paul expresses complete confidence in the One to whom he has invested his life. He knows that He will safeguard his soul—both through life and into death.

Therefore, Paul encourages Timothy, keep fast hold on the sound words you have heard from me. The message which carried such deep meaning for Paul will also serve as the basis for Timothy's teaching and preaching ministry. And that message will be safeguarded by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In this last letter of the Apostle Paul, we sense his deep pathos as he longs after his dear friend Timothy, and expresses his concern for the safety of the church

for which he had given his life.

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

1. Review the relationship between Paul and Timothy. See Acts 16:1-3; 19-22; Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19-22; 1 Thessalonians 3:2.
2. Certainly people can come to faith out of heathendom. However, reflect on the many advantages one has who is reared in a Christian environment. And thank God if you were.
3. Many church workers can give testimony to the positive effects of mentoring in their lives. What elements are necessary for this to take place and be effective?
4. Paul willingly, gladly, suffered much for the cause of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). How could he endure so cheerfully? Does our commitment equal his?
5. What is the secret to a satisfying Christian life? There are several suggestions in this passage.

## **FEBRUARY 12, 2006**

### ***Developing Christian Character***

2 Timothy 2:14-26

In Chapter 2, Paul continues to give encouragement to Timothy in his work. He also instructs him to appoint other faithful men to help with the work of teaching and spreading the gospel message. He also speaks to the diligence and commitment to be exhibited by such men.

Then as we come to verse 14, Paul here reminds Timothy to remind those he appoints as leaders of those things he has just been reminded of. They are not to enter into argument and are to avoid useless and vain babblings. These things do not promote spirituality, but lead to ruination of faith, as has happened to Hymenaeus and Philetus. Their error was in claiming that the resurrection was

already past. While it is impossible to determine exactly what their teaching entailed, it is likely they were spiritualizing that final, bodily resurrection as taught in Scripture.

Unfortunately, these men were teaching their false doctrine from within the confines of the church and were influencing unstable souls away from the pure faith. However, Paul says, God knows those who are truly His. And those who are sincere about their commitment to Him will shun iniquity and false teaching.

That within the church there will be both sincere and insincere believers (v. 20) is a fact taught by Jesus Himself in the parables of the Wheat and Tares and the Drag-net (Matthew 13). Those who keep aloof from damaging influences and senseless debate and argumentation are thus prepared for active service for the Lord (v. 21). And yes, there will be varying levels of usefulness among those fitted for service. Not all are endowed or motivated alike.

Paul then points out certain requirements for the servant of God (verses 22-26). There are things to pursue and things to avoid. Anything that would compromise one's faith, commitment, or usefulness is to be avoided—youthful lusts, foolish debate, strife. Qualities which enhance one's service for the Lord and the church are to be pursued—righteousness, faith, love, peace, gentleness, patience, meekness.

The goal here is not only personal spiritual development but enhancement of one's service in the work of the Lord through personal spiritual growth. The church needs individuals who are capable of guiding others out of error, back into the way of truth. Many of these individuals are confused and have perhaps been entrapped unwittingly. They need to be recovered for the Lord through patient teaching and loving concern.

Now let's drop back to verse 15. To Timothy, his appointees (verse 2), and to us, the challenge is to diligence in keeping

oneself useful to God. This diligence will result in unabashed dedication and service, a qualified and prepared workman. This diligence and preparation will be enhanced by the awareness that one indeed handles the “word of truth.” As spokesmen for God, careful preparation and diligent service is high priority.

Now go back and reread this passage with an awareness of its implications for your life.

***For thought and discussion***

1. What are the dangers of engaging in fruitless debate and argumentation on theological issues?
2. How do false teachings take root in people’s lives, and how can the church be more effective in combating these influences? Some discussion would be in order.
3. How should the detection of error be dealt with in the church, and what are some safeguards to put in place to minimize the potential of error creeping in?
4. God doesn’t demand great things of us. He just expects our best. Are we living up to His expectation of us? (See v. 15.)
5. Our world is full of confused and deceived people, adrift on the rootless philosophies of men. What a challenge this poses for us as Christians to live and verbalize our faith.

**FEBRUARY 19, 2006**

***A Faithful Mentor***

2 Timothy 3:10–4:8

As we move into Chapter 3, Paul is warning Timothy of the perils of the last days. There will be an increase of outright wickedness and of pseudo-religiosity. People will turn from truth and right to self-satisfying pleasures. Timothy needs to guard against these deceiving, damning influences in his care of the church. And the threat is with us no less today.

As we pick up our lesson text for today, Paul reaffirms for Timothy his exemplary life. He had been faithful in his teaching, manner of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, and in persecutions. He recognized the Lord’s hand of deliverance while acknowledging that those who live for Christ can expect to suffer persecution. And he also warns that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.” Paul does not sugarcoat the Christian life (see Acts 14:22).

As a safeguard against seducers, Paul challenges Timothy to continue in the instruction he has had, both from Paul himself and from his mother and grandmother. Then Paul makes that classic statement on the inspiration and effectiveness of the Scripture. It was given by God and serves to guide, correct, and equip those dedicated to knowing and following Him. The Scripture is completely adequate for all of man’s needs.

Therefore, Paul instructs Timothy (4:1, 2), I charge you to preach that Word. Be ready at all times, whether convenient or not, to use the Scripture to minister to the needs of individuals. Souls will be judged by that Word. It needs to be presented clearly and forthrightly, without mixture of error.

Some will turn away, preferring to hear only what pleases their sinful, selfish desires. Those who oppose the pure Word of God open themselves to all sorts of weird and false teachings. Paul warns Timothy to be on guard, personally, and to make full proof of his ministry by faithful proclamation of the message of salvation.

After warning Timothy of seducing influences and challenging him to faithfulness, Paul launches into his farewell testimony. He recognizes that his time is short, yet he gives assurance that he is ready. He has fought a good fight, putting his whole life and energies to the task Christ laid out before him there on the road to Damascus. He has completed that task. He has been faithful to God’s call

and the mission he was given. More importantly, he has kept the faith.

While he has observed many departing from the faith, heeding seducing spirits, embracing false doctrine, Paul affirms that his faith and trust have remained true and steadfast, firm to the end. Because of that, a victor's crown awaits him. That crown awaits all who remain faithful in life and eagerly anticipate the appearing of Christ in final triumph over sin and evil.

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

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

1. Probably all of us have someone whom we have looked up to as an example. What was it that impressed you about their life? And are you modeling for others the things they impressed upon you?
2. What are some safeguards to spiritual safety in the face of increasing wickedness in our society and apostasy in the church? Discuss this with your class.
3. Why is the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture such an important one for the church?
4. Why are some people so set against hearing the sound doctrine of God's Word?
5. Paul approached the end of life with a tremendous testimony of faithfulness and forward anticipation. Review his life and allow his experiences to challenge you to faithfulness and anticipation.

See lesson notes for August 22, 2004, for additional help.

## **FEBRUARY 26, 2006**

### ***Living and Teaching the Word of God***

Titus 2:1-15

Paul's letter to Titus was another personal letter to a son in the faith (1:4), and co-worker in the ministry of the gospel and administration of the

churches. Paul's letter to Titus was written about the same time as his first letter to Timothy, and likely soon after release from his first imprisonment in Rome. The content parallels that of his letters to Timothy: church organization, an emphasis on sound doctrine, and the need for holy living.

In Chapter 1 Paul authenticates Titus' mission on Crete, verse 5, and outlines the characteristics of those to be considered for positions of leadership. Then in Chapter 2, where our lesson picks up, he turns to personal instructions to Titus in his guidance of the church. His first challenge is to speak only what befits or is becoming to sound doctrine. That is to be the basis for all instruction.

Paul then gives Titus specific instructions for specific groups of individuals. Old men are to be temperate, dignified, sound in faith and charity. Older women likewise are to exhibit characteristics of maturity and uprightness. Incumbent on these older, more mature individuals lies the responsibility of teaching and mentoring the younger generation, guiding them into paths of usefulness and spiritual development. It is necessary for the younger generation to be self-controlled and teachable. All of this is to honor the principles of the Word of God.

Servants, or bond-slaves also, verses 9 and 10, are exhorted to obedient service. They are not to talk back to their masters, they are to serve faithfully, to be honest and not pilfer their master's goods. In all things they are to demonstrate the characteristics of saints even though in a position of servitude. Their joyful, honest service will give credence to the life-changing power of the gospel.

In verses 7 and 8, Paul gives Titus personal instruction in exemplary living. As a leader he must live, speak, and act in such a manner to enhance his position and the gospel which he promotes. A leader whose life does not exhibit the qualities he teaches to others is no leader at all.

In the last five verses of the chapter we have the gospel message in a nutshell. God's great gift of grace for all men has come in the person of His Son (v. 11). The message of salvation He brought teaches men to deny ungodly, worldly lusts and to live soberly and righteously (v. 12). And not only that, but this salvation has a forward look, the anticipation of the glorious coming again of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 13). That coming will usher us into His glorious presence where we will forever be free from sin (v. 14). That awareness creates a servant attitude in His followers, an eagerness to please Him now through a display of good works.

Paul's final word to Titus (v. 15), is to be bold in his teaching of these principles. He has the authority of His position and, more importantly, the authority of the Word of God to back up his ministry.

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

1. Some study on the time and setting of Paul's letter to Titus will give you a better feel for its content and purpose.
2. God has no grandchildren. So it is very important for every generation to be taught in God's ways. Are we doing our part so subsequent generations will not fall into apostasy?
3. This lesson points out the tremendous responsibility of being a living example for others to follow. What areas do we need to be especially alert to? How can we be better examples? Spend some time in discussion.
4. Give special attention to verses 11 through 14. Note the purifying, other-worldly effect the gospel message has on the follower of Christ.
5. To base our living, our teaching, our hope on the authority of the Word of God gives stability and direction to life. To deny that authority, as so many are doing today, leaves us where?

See lesson for August 29, 2004, for additional help. ■

#### **MICHAEL S. ZEHR . . . cont'd.**

Brother Zehr was also active in the Conservative A.M. Conference, having served on the executive committee from 1933-44. He was involved in evangelistic efforts and Bible conferences, as well as teaching at many winter Bible schools where he was much appreciated by the young people.

After the death of his wife, Brother Zehr went to live with his daughter, but by November of 1943 he went to winter in Arizona due to bad bouts with asthma. Eventually he moved there permanently due to his recurring physical problem.

In tune with the Lord, Brother Zehr had a strong devotional life and closely followed God's Word. He was an enthusiastic and willing worker who was overheard on several occasions singing songs of praise to the Lord. An encourager, he loved to talk about the Lord and His Word.

Zehr was serious about doing the will of God. Concerned for the spiritual well-being of his flock, he preached the Word with clarity in a systematic fashion so that the young people would get a clear view of the "whole counsel of God." A humble man, he was willing to seek forgiveness from anyone he had wronged. His attitude in dealing with problems was to consider what the Lord would have done to reach a solution. Truly Brother Zehr was firmly founded on Christ with the Word of God as his daily guide.

Michael Zehr passed away in Arizona on July 5, 1944. The funeral was held in his home church in Pigeon River after which he was buried alongside his companion.

—Gail L. Emerson



# Newslines . . .

by Rebecca Good

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

## Soldier of the Cross Called Home

Well-known conservative Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leader Adrian Rogers died November 15, 2005. He was undergoing treatment for cancer, but died from pneumonia. He was 74 years old.

Rogers pastored the Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis from 1972-2005. He also headed a nationwide television and radio ministry called *Love Worth Finding*.

During the 1970s, conservatives in the SBC were concerned by the liberal theological trends at SBC seminaries. Rogers agreed to become a candidate for the SBC presidency, pledging that if he were elected, he would nominate to seminary and denominational boards only those who believed in the authority and inerrancy of the Bible. In 1979, Rogers won the election and kept his pledge. He and his successors saw conservatives take over the 16-million-member denomination. —from *WORLD*

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## Idealism vs. Reality?

A recent survey by the PBS program *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly* found that the majority of Americans consider the “traditional” family to be ideal—a

heterosexual couple, married for life, with children. Nearly all Americans consider this to be the best arrangement, and 71 percent of respondents agreed that “God’s plan for marriage is one man, one woman, for life.” Most respondents opposed marriage and adoption rights for same-sex couples. However, 52 percent said that divorce is “usually the best solution when a couple can’t seem to work out their marriage problems.” This is likely because many Americans have unfortunately chosen this path. As John Green, professor of political science at the University of Akron said, “Americans have become much, much more tolerant of deviations from that ideal, I suspect, because they themselves have experienced those deviations.”

—from *Christian Century*

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## China Unashamed of Its Human-Rights Abuse

During President George Bush’s recent trip to China, he pressed Chinese leaders for more human rights and religious freedom in their country. However, the Chinese were unresponsive and even defiant. Speaking of the encounter, Nina Shea of the Center for Religious Freedom said, “They’re a

repressing and persecuting government. They're not trying to hide it." She went on, "I think they realize there are no ramifications and there's not going to be any. They are now in the World Trade Organization, and they have trade status with the United States and there's just going to be no repercussions." —from *CitizenLink*

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**"Easy" Choice Becomes Even Easier**

A recent study by the Institute of Child Health and Human Development has come up with a way to test for Down's syndrome earlier in a woman's pregnancy. Since the early 90s, tests have been available in the second trimester. Doctors guess that 80% to 90% of women who discover they are carrying a Down's baby choose abortion. With such knowledge available in the first trimester, when abortions are considered less medically and psychologically risky, it is likely that even more parents will choose what appears to be the easy road—to eliminate the Down's child. —from *TIME*

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**The NICU—A Fetal-Pain Lab**

Dr. Jean Wright, executive director of the Backus Children's Hospital in Savannah, Georgia, responds to those who try to assert that fetuses do not feel pain before the 29th week of gestation. "Anyone who has walked through a neonatal intensive care unit and seen a 25-, 26-, 28-weeker knows that's not true," comments this member of Focus on the Family's Physician Resource Council. "There's our perfect place for studying in utero pain to the fetus, because we have those babies every single day in our hospitals, essentially on the outside, where we can look at their grimace, see their reaction to pain, and measure their stress hormones." —from *CitizenLink*

—from *CitizenLink*

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**Saudi Arabia Remains Unsanc-tioned in Spite of Religious Per-secution**

As in 2004, on November 8, 2005, the U.S. named Saudi Arabia one of the worst violators of religious freedom in the world. This is an exclusive group, to which only seven other nations belong. The U.S.'s laws require it take actions to pressure such countries to change their actions. However, Saudi Arabia received a six-month waiver on September 30. John Hanford, U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, said, "We feel like the government of Saudi Arabia is moving in the right direction. . . . My heart and passion in this is to advance religious freedom as far as we can. And if I feel like some additional time to discuss some important issues may yield some meaningful change, I want to give that a try."

—from *WORLD*

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**Just an Excuse for Dependence?**

"When I hear that catchphrase of the liberals, 'It takes a village to raise a child,' I hear *Big*—big news media, big entertainment, big universities and public schools, some big businesses and some big national labor unions, and of course, the biggest Big of all, the federal government."

—Quoted from *It Takes a Family* by Rick Santorum in *Citizen*

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**The Corrupting Power of Money**

Ralph Reed, former executive director of the Christian Coalition, and now president of the Century Strategies consulting firm and candidate for lieutenant governor of Georgia, has for years publicly rallied evangelical Christians to protest legalized gambling. Now we know that he received money from the Choctaw tribe of Mississippi

who run a very profitable casino in their state and do not want any competition in neighboring Alabama. Dan Ireland, executive director of the anti-gambling Alabama Citizens Action Program, said, "I think anyone who is against gambling wouldn't take money if they thought it had anything to do with gambling."

Something similar happened concerning the China Free Trade Agreement. In 1997, Reed was saying that the U.S. should not extend most favored nation trading status to China because of that nation's human-rights abuses. In 1998, he was hired by a group of U.S. companies to help get China the trading status, because it would benefit those companies. Reed then hired the DeMoss Group, a public relations firm representing dozens of large evangelical organizations, to encourage Christian ministries with staff or missionaries in China to support China's favored trade status. Their slogan: "A nation open to trade is a nation open to ministry." The DeMoss group did not mention Mr. Reed's firm or the business interests behind the effort. They did develop ads saying things such as denying China the status would provoke "an ill-advised and counterproductive trade war with China that would close the door to the Gospel." And "The progress of democracy and the salvation of millions of souls depends on it."

As Tom Grey, executive director of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling says, "The real story here is that Ralph Reed used social conservatives for his own corporate ends. You don't get much more of a public betrayal than that." —from *WORLD*

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### Realistic Wedding Vows?

More and more people are writing their own marriage vows—with loopholes. The ominous phrase "till death

do us part" is being replaced by profound sentiments like the following: "as long as our love shall last" or "as long as our marriage shall serve the greatest good," or even more crassly, "until our time together is over."

—from *Citizen*

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### "Dear Parent A and Parent B . . ."

Gay activists in Massachusetts want the words *mother* and *father* to be deleted from all birth certificates in their state. The endearing terms Parent A and Parent B would stand in their place. Local and state officials are promoting the change, though Governor Mitt Romney is blocking it. The case will likely end up in the same court system which legalized same-sex marriage in the state.

—from *Citizen*

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### Baylor Professor Rodney Stark on the Myth of the Dark Ages

"In the past few years even encyclopedias and dictionaries have begun to acknowledge that it was all a lie, that the Dark Ages never were. This always should have been obvious since by the end of the so-called Dark Ages, European science and technology had far exceeded that of Rome and Greece, and all the rest of the world, for that matter." Stark goes on to enumerate innovations from that time period: "The perfection and widespread use of waterwheels, windmills, and pumps, the invention of the compass, stirrups, the crossbow, cannons, effective horse harnesses, eyeglasses, clocks, chimneys, violins, double-entry bookkeeping, and insurance. This list doesn't begin to do justice to this era that historians of science now refer to as an age of remarkable innovation and discovery."

—from an interview with Rodney Stark in *WORLD* magazine

# Focused on Two Worlds

by Mark D. Avery

*“Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23).*

This verse illustrates a conflict of desires in the Apostle Paul’s life. Having great hope beyond his present circumstances, the apostle had a great desire “to depart, and to be with Christ.” Yet knowing the needs of his fellow Christians, Paul realized that continuing his ministry on earth was necessary.

The statement “a desire to depart” could be understood as “a metaphor taken from the commander of a vessel in a foreign port, who feels a strong desire to set sail and get to his own country and family; but this desire is counterbalanced by a conviction that the general interests of the voyage may be best answered by his longer stay in the port where his vessel now rides; for he is not in dock, he is not aground, but rides at anchor in the port, and may any hour weigh [anchor] and be gone. Such was the condition of the apostle: he was not at home, but although he was abroad it was on his employer’s business; he wishes to return, and is cleared out and ready to set sail, but he has not received his last orders from his owner, and whatever desire he may feel to be at home he will faithfully wait till his final orders arrive” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

Christians today share Paul’s perspective. More and more we realize that we do not belong here. Our eternal citizenship is in heaven. Yet until the day God takes us to our eternal country, we remain as temporary citizens in this world. Not fitting into the present state of affairs, “this present world,” challenges us to keep hoping for the next.

Paul’s confident hope told him emphatically that departing “to be with Christ” would be “far better” than remaining alive in the world. Interest-

ingly, we are told that “far better” could be translated “much more better.” The idea seems to be that heaven so far surpasses the present that we cannot even compare the two.

Knowing the glory that awaited him in heaven, the apostle remained focused on the needs of his present ministry. Paul knew that ministry was not about him. Ministry was about Christ and helping others to more effectively understand and serve Him. So the “furtherance and joy of faith” of the Philippian believers were his priorities. He was committed to the strengthening and maturing of his fellow believers. He wanted to go, but he wanted to stay.

An important lesson for pastors and church leaders, even Christians in general, can be found in this passage. In the midst of the busyness and urgency of ministry, we must focus on two worlds. We focus on the present world not as a part of it, but motivated and diligently working to help people get ready for the next. Yet we focus on the next world, heaven, so that we do not forget what we are living and working for now.

Someone has rightly cautioned that we should not be so heavenly minded as to be of no earthly good. Perhaps the greater danger today is that we become so earthly minded that we are of no heavenly good. The better option, however, is for us to capture the emphasis of Paul and become, or remain, focused on two worlds. We do that by maintaining a positive Christian witness and hope in Christ as well as a positive, hopeful waiting for heaven. ■

—From *The Church Herald and Holiness Banner*, February 2005. Used with permission.

# Just Friends

Name Withheld

*[The writer, a mature single person with experience on the mission field, writes anonymously. To allow the Lord to satisfy us, to live above reproach, and to cause no offense requires us to be careful. Otherwise, we may give offense to others or, God forbid, stumble into sin ourselves. —PLM]*

Have our churches swung on a pendulum from one extreme to the other? When our parents grew up, talking alone between youth boys and girls usually indicated special friendship or a dating relationship. Today's youth on the whole seem to have much greater freedom to interact with each other and do so with less accountability. It is beautiful to see a youth or singles' group enjoy Christian fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ, but I would point out some potential problems with too much freedom.

Here are some true accounts, names changed, that may help us develop God-honoring relationships:

1. Hank, a Christian man of 50, works in a store. There he becomes acquainted with several young Christian girls who also work there. After about a year, Hank begins to call these young girls at home just to chat. When Hank and his wife are Youth Sponsors, he may be seen at any given youth function sidling up to these girls to share a joke or to chat with them. Our first impulse is to say Hank should know better. Before we point fingers, let us remind ourselves that these patterns did not begin AFTER Hank's marriage.

2. Edward is a single man of 40 who feels God is calling him to remain unmarried. His kind, listening ear earns him many friends among the youth of his church. Twenty-two-year-old Elsie is hoping to save her dying relationship with her boyfriend. In desperation she turns to Edward as an understanding friend.

Edward patiently listens for hours when Elsie calls him. After her relationship with her boyfriend ends, Edward meets Elsie for coffee when she is having a bad day. Edward is convinced God is using him to encourage youth. Why is Elsie confiding in a single man rather than a Christian sister? What personal needs does Edward indicate by his helpfulness to a girl much younger than he?

3. Kate is in Voluntary Service but struggles spiritually. One night she is on duty with Josh. He encourages her with Scripture and promises to pray for her. As the months slip by and they go back to their respective communities, Josh continues to give Kate encouragement in the form of cards and phone calls. After Josh's wedding, he hears that Kate has turned her back on anything that has to do with Christianity. He feels guilty that he couldn't do more for her. What unworthy motives may Kate have had in using Josh as an encourager? Was Josh wrong in trying to help Kate spiritually at the same time he was nearing marriage to his "one and only sweetheart"?

4. Janet and Joe are both 24 and great friends. They have even discussed that they are not looking for a serious relationship with each other. In fact, Joe's girl friend is Janet's sister. After Janet's sister turns Joe down, Janet is there with kind support and prayers. As Joe waits for God's leading in his life, he continues his friendship with Janet. Among their many activities together, they usually manage to be in the same carload to go on visitation. Recently they enjoyed the challenge of going to night classes together. During this time, a sincere Christian fellow asks Janet for a date. She begins to compare his character with Joe's and struggles about giving up a satisfying friendship for a relationship that may not work. Several more fellows are disappointed as Janet waits for

God to send her a husband like Joe. Was Joe selfish to expect Janet to share with him when he had a close friendship with Janet's sister? What were Janet's sister's reasons for quitting Joe? Is Janet being realistic in her expectations?

Young man, what kind of husband would you make if you assume a close friendship with a young lady who could be your special friend, but you are "only helping her"? Are you deceiving yourself by reckoning your spirituality to be high because of your commitment to help strug-

gling sisters in your circles?

Young lady, is it not foolish to think God will show you His will for marriage, if you are already enjoying close friendship with a fellow? Can a man, married or single, continue to show you extra attention if you do not encourage it?

Parents, is this what you want for your dear children?

Ministers, are you aware of what's happening in your youth group? ■

—From *Calvary Messenger*, January 2005.  
Used with permission.



## Apostasy Under God's Microscope

by William McCarrell (1886-1979)

Apostasy is different from spiritual error, unbelief, heresy, or atheism. One may be an unbeliever or an atheist because of never having received spiritual light. Heresy may be caused by Satan leading a true believer into wrong conception or emphasis on any phase of Bible truth (2 Tim. 2:25, 26). One defined heresy as "lopsided truth." Apostasy includes turning from revealed truth, especially truth concerning Jesus Christ's deity, and also, salvation from a lost eternity through faith in His shed blood and finished work on Calvary. Apostates often profess Christianity while they reject, in essence, its foundation truths (2 Tim. 3:5).

### ***Originated With Satan***

Apostasy originated with Satan. While having to do with God's throne, he set his will against God's will. He apostatized (turned) from God's Word, God's will, and God's way (Isa. 14:12-15). He suffered God's severe judgment. God's only method of dealing with persistent and unsundered apostasy is to judge it (Isa. 5:5-7; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; 2 Peter 2:17-21; Jude 11-15). The apostasy in the last-day modernistic church, described in the Laodicean Church letter,

causes Christ to spue the said church system out of His mouth (Rev. 3:14-16).

Adam and Eve were apostasy's first victims. Satan induced them to follow his example and thus turn from God's Word, God's will, and God's way. Their apostasy brought to mankind all the sin, sickness, suffering, sorrow, problems, and death that it has experienced or will experience. Adam and Eve were delivered from apostasy by God's grace.

### ***First Propagandist***

Cain was the first propagandist of apostasy. In attempting to approach God without an offering that expressed faith in the blood and substitutionary work of Jesus Christ, he rejected God's Word, will, and way. Persistence in apostasy caused spiritual hardness and progress in sin, which produced the murder of his brother Abel. Persisting in this apostasy, he was banished from God's presence under a curse and preserved for future judgment under God. He endeavored to lose himself and conscience in earthly living. Tracing his line for seven generations, one finds it characterized by sin, violence, unbelief, blasphemy, and defiance of God (Gen. 4:16-24).

God judged it in the flood (Gen. 6).

### ***Always a Curse***

Apostasy can never be anything but a curse in time and eternity. The Old Testament records many instances of havoc wrought by it in Israel. God judged it in Israel by turning the nation over to spiritual darkness, which caused rejection of Christ and thus centuries of individual and national suffering and judgment under God (Isa. 6:9-10; Matt. 13:15). Apostasy produces Jezebels and Ahabs and their equivalent. It is always in controversy with God's biblical servants. Elijah's enduring and crowning work was his opposition to apostasy. There is no compromise between God and apostasy. God's true servants, such as Elijah, know no compromise with it. Compromise is sin. Elijah obeyed God when he slew Baal's apostate prophets (1 Kings 18:40). The ministry of every major prophet of the Old Testament is recorded largely because of their separated stand concerning apostasy. The 10 tribes of Israel went into captivity because of their apostasy (2 Kings 17). The two tribes of Judah followed for the same reason (2 Chron. 34). Unsaved religious apostates maneuvered the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Religious apostates were chiefly responsible for the martyrdom of the apostles.

### ***In Romans 1:21-23***

Eternity alone will reveal the full course of apostasy to the human race. Chapter 1 of Romans presents a partial and graphic description of the course and results of apostasy amidst mankind. Verses 18 to 20 reveal that mankind willfully rejects God's truth. The statement "hold the truth in unrighteousness" means that they prefer sin to light, rejecting God's light lest it rob them of sinful gratification. Seven downward steps in apostasy are mentioned in Romans 1:21-23. They refused to glorify God and thus became unthankful. This produced vain imagination, which caused heart darkness. This produced egotism regarding personal wisdom. They then became fools before

God. Finally they endeavored to change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, birds, fourfooted beasts and creeping things. What light this chapter offers upon the sin and suffering of humanity!

Much of apostasy's scope is given in Romans 1. That apostasy from God's light (Word) is caused through desire for sin is revealed in verse 18. Apostasy concerning God's creation light in verses 19 and 20 is followed by apostasy as to spiritual light (Rom. 1:21-27). Apostasy from God (vv. 28-31) produces apostasy of conscience (v. 32). Here God describes mankind's apostasy of body (v. 24), of soul—the soul being the seat of the affections and will (v. 26) and of spirit (v. 28)—the spirit being that spirit which God has given man and which so functions through his mind as to make possible his knowing God. What warning light these Scriptures sound concerning present-day evolutionary teaching!

God matches apostasy with judgment. First, because they attempted to lower God to a beast's level, God gave them up to beastly uncleanness and defilement of the body (Rom. 1:24). Second, because they attempted to change God's truth into a lie and exalted nature over the supernatural by advocating the worship of the creature more than the Creator, God gave them up to bondage to fallen nature, including sins against nature (Rom. 1:25-27). Third, because in turning away from God they desired knowledge without God, He gave them over to a reprobate mind, which means a mind incapable of forming correct judgment, especially along moral and spiritual lines (Rom. 1:28-32). It is stated that a Chinese, helping a missionary translate Scripture, refused to write when they reached Romans Chapter 1. Asked why, he stated, "You wrote that since coming to China." This Scripture describes much of human life in every nation.

### ***Within the Professing Church***

Apostasy within the professing church is the most terrible in God's sight and brings

His heaviest judgment. God, when warningly describing this apostasy, states, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine: but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). Every writer in the New Testament warns of apostate teachers in the church. The characteristics, fruitage, and judgment of these apostate teachers are described in such Scriptures as 2 Peter 2 and Jude. They are Satan's preachers who camouflage their apostasy by proclaiming various phases of righteousness. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). While proclaiming some phases of righteousness, these apostate teachers do not proclaim God's righteousness in Christ, as described in Romans 3:21-31 and Philippians 3:7-9.

Jesus warned about apostate teachers (Matt. 24:4, 5), that their work would climax in the Antichrist (Matt. 24:15). Because they are forerunners of and preparers for Antichrist, they are referred to as antichrist (1 John 2:18; 4:1-3). Their work consummates in Antichrist and his false religious leader (Rev. 13). Their teachings lead mankind into spiritual darkness under Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8-10) and into terrible hardness concerning sin. Scripture states, "And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts" (Rev. 9:20, 21).

#### ***Past and Future Fruitage***

Much apostasy fruitage of past days is

described in Romans 1:18-32. Thirty great signs of last apostate days in 2 Timothy 3:1-13 describe much present-day apostasy fruitage, while Revelation Chapters 4-19 pictures much future fruitage of apostasy. One significantly suggested that the Book of Jude in its warning description of apostate teachers serves as a vestibule into the Book of Revelation with its description of God's wrath poured upon an apostate human race and earth.

Every believer in Christ should so study the Bible as to enable him to discern the workings of apostasy, especially during dark days preceding Christ's return. Every saved one should pray that God's sufficient grace may enable obedience to the many Bible admonitions to safeguard self and others from apostasy by separation from the same.

#### ***Tears Down God's Work***

Apostasy ever attempts to tear down that which God has built. A well-known evangelist asked a modernist what he was proposing to accomplish through his teaching. The modernist replied, "Our work is to tear down that which you build up."

#### ***Destroys Missions***

Apostasy destroys missions. This country was recently startled by suggestions from a layman's committee on missions. Had these suggestions been followed, the church would have ceased from gospel missionary work. Apostasy in the professing church has caused recalling of thousands of missionaries from their fields.

#### ***Supplants Churches***

Apostasy supplants churches by leading professing, and sometimes genuine, Christians into occupancy with activities that are unbiblical and often diametrically opposed to God's work for His church as clearly outlined in His Word.

#### ***Closes Churches***

Apostasy closes churches. Certain authorities claim that as many as 60,000

Protestant churches have closed in the United States during recent years.

### ***Hinders Revival***

Apostasy hinders revivals. John Wesley and a few young men gathered weekly to study God's Word in order to live as directed in the Bible. Because they endeavored to follow Bible methods in daily living and church conduct, they were nicknamed "Methodists." Their greatest problem was to counteract the apostasy of their day.

### ***Deadens Spiritual Life***

Apostasy deadens spiritual atmosphere. The currents and influences of apostasy can make saved ones indifferent to the condition of lost souls, the dangers of sin and its grievousness before God.

Apostasy aims to occupy Christians with worldliness. A young woman, a member of an apostate church, was remarkably saved from worldliness and sin. She was telling her pastor how she had turned from her former companions. Before he realized the depth of God's work in her life, he, in his biblical ignorance, assured her that she need not be troubled about turning from worldly associations because the church which he pastored and she belonged to offered her everything that her former associations offered.

### ***Eliminates Prayer***

Apostasy eliminates prayer. It robs of spiritual light (2 Thess. 2:10-12). It debauches mankind (Rom. 1:18-32). It shatters morals. A present-day prominent periodical described how the wife of the president of an institution known worldwide for its apostate teaching hobbled in drawing sketches of nude bodies. She conceived the idea of sketching her 11-year-old daughter in the nude and sending the sketch as a Christmas greeting card to a thousand fellow faculty members, students, and friends of the university. The write-up indicated that the daughter was so embarrassed by the Christmas card that she persuaded her father to

permit her to attend another school.

The first statement in a satanically written book which has startled many by announcing plans for breakdown of present government, social, and moral standards, begins by suggesting that if people in general are given the liberty of indulging in any immorality desired, these same people can be manipulated to put over any program desired.

### ***Leads Into Great Tribulation***

Apostasy leads this world into the Great Tribulation, prophetically described in Chapters 4-19 of Revelation. It will never be overcome on earth until God destroys it with fire from heaven following Christ's millennial reign (Rev. 20:7-9).

### ***Threatens Destruction***

Apostasy ever threatens the destruction of the human race. It is always folly, whether indulged in by unsaved mankind, Israel or the church. It ever tests saved ones. This test is found in God's command that Christians should be separate from apostasy (2 Cor. 6:14-18) and that they should contend with all their being against it (Jude 3). Their contending is to be constructive. It will be such in the measure that they obey the exhortations of Jude 20-23. Here the Holy Spirit urges Christians to fight against apostasy by building themselves up in the most holy faith (Bible study); by praying in the Holy Spirit; by keeping themselves in the love of God (spiritual life); by safeguarding themselves from sin, worldliness, and apostasy through watching for the Lord Jesus Christ to return and finally by endeavoring to save souls, even those of apostates. God will call every Christian to account with regard to obeying His command: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that bideth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 10-11). ■

—From *Foundation* September/October 2005.  
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# The Disappearance of Church Discipline— How Can We Recover? Part one

by R. Albert Mohler Jr.

*What is pure is corrupted much more quickly than what is corrupt is purified.* — John Cassian (AD 360-435)

The decline of church discipline is perhaps the most visible failure of the contemporary church. No longer concerned with maintaining purity of confession or lifestyle, the contemporary church sees itself as a voluntary association of autonomous members, with minimal moral accountability of God, much less to each other.

The absence of church discipline is no longer remarkable—it is generally not even noticed. Regulative and restorative church discipline is, to many church members, no longer a meaningful category, or even a memory. The present generation of both ministers and church members is virtually without experience of biblical church discipline.

As a matter of fact, most Christians introduced to the biblical teaching concerning church discipline—the third mark of the church—confront the issue of church discipline as an idea they have never before encountered. At first hearing, the issue seems as antiquarian and foreign as the Spanish Inquisition and the Salem witch trials. Their only acquaintance with the disciplinary ministry of the church is often a literary invention such as *The Scarlet Letter*.

And yet, without a recovery of functional church discipline—firmly established upon the principles revealed in the Bible—the church will continue its slide into moral dissolution and relativism. Evangelicals have long recognized discipline as the “third mark” of the authentic church. Authentic biblical discipline is not an elective, but a necessary and integral mark of authentic Christianity.

How did this happen? How could the

church so quickly and pervasively abandon one of its most essential functions and responsibilities? The answer is found in developments both internal and external to the church.

Put simply, the abandonment of church discipline is linked to American Christianity’s creeping accommodation to American culture. As the twentieth century began, this accommodation became increasingly evident as the church acquiesced to a culture of moral individualism.

Though the nineteenth century was not a golden era for American evangelicals, the century did see the consolidation of evangelical theology and church patterns. Manuals of church discipline and congregational records indicate that discipline was regularly applied. Protestant congregations exercised discipline as a necessary and natural ministry to the members of the church, and as a means of protecting the doctrinal and moral integrity of the congregation.

As ardent congregationalists, the Baptists left a particularly instructive record of nineteenth-century discipline. Historian Gregory A. Wills aptly commented, “To an antebellum Baptist, a church without discipline would hardly have counted as a church.” Churches held regular “Days of Discipline” when the congregation would gather to heal breaches of fellowship, admonish wayward members, rebuke the obstinate, and, if necessary, excommunicate those who resisted discipline. In so doing, congregations understood themselves to be following a biblical pattern laid down by Christ and the apostles for the protection and correction of disciples.

No sphere of life was considered outside the congregation’s accountability. Members were to conduct their lives and witness in harmony with the Bible and with

established moral principles. Depending on the denominational polity, discipline was codified in church covenants, books of discipline, congregational manuals, and confessions of faith. Discipline covered both doctrine and conduct. Members were disciplined for behavior which violated biblical principles or congregational covenants, but also for violations of doctrine and belief. Members were considered to be under the authority of the congregation and accountable to each other.

By the turn of the century, however, church discipline was already on the decline. In the wake of the Enlightenment, criticism of the Bible and the doctrines of evangelical orthodoxy was widespread. Even the most conservative denominations began to show evidence of decreased attention to theological orthodoxy. At the same time, the larger culture moved toward the adoption of autonomous moral individualism. The result of these internal and external developments was the abandonment of church discipline as ever larger portions of the church member's life were considered off-limits to the congregation.

This great shift in church life followed the tremendous cultural transformations of the early twentieth century—an era of “progressive” thought and moral liberalization. By the 1960s, only a minority of churches even pretended to practice regulative church discipline. Significantly, confessional accountability and moral discipline were generally abandoned together.

The theological category of sin has been replaced, in many circles, with the psychological concept of therapy. As Philip Reiff has argued, the “Triumph of the Therapeutic” is now a fixture of modern American culture. Church members may make poor choices, fail to live up to the expectations of an oppressive culture, or be inadequately self-actualized—but they no longer sin.

Individuals now claim an enormous zone of personal privacy and moral autonomy. The congregation—redefined as a mere voluntary association—has no right to intrude into this space. Many congregations have

forfeited any responsibility to confront even the most public sins of their members. Consumed with pragmatic methods of church growth and congregational engineering, most churches leave moral matters in the domain of the individual conscience.

As Thomas Oden notes, the confession of sin is now *passe* and hopelessly outdated to many minds. “Naturalistic reductionism has invited us to reduce alleged individual sins to social influences for which individuals are not responsible. Narcissistic hedonism has demeaned any talk of sin or confession as ungratifying and dysfunctional. Autonomous individualism has divorced sin from a caring community. Absolute relativism has regarded moral values as so ambiguous that there is no measuring rod against which to assess anything as sin. Thus modernity, which is characterized by the confluence of these four ideological streams, has presumed to do away with confession, and has in fact made confession an embarrassment to the accommodating church of modernity.”

The very notion of shame has been discarded by a generation for which shame is an unnecessary and repressive hindrance to personal fulfillment. Even secular observers have noted the shamelessness of modern culture. As James Twitchell comments, “We have in the last generation tried to push shame aside. The human-potential and recovered-memory movements in psychology; the moral relativism of audience-driven Christianity; the penalty-free, all-ideas-are-equally-good transformation in higher education; the rise of no-fault behavior before the law; the often outrageous distortions in the telling of history so that certain groups can feel better about themselves; and the ‘I’m shame-free, but you should be ashamed of yourself’ tone of political discourse are just some of the instances wherein this can be seen.”

Twitchell sees the Christian church aiding and abetting this moral transformation and abandonment of shame—which is, after all, a natural product of sinful behavior.

“Looking at the Christian Church today, you can only see a dim pentimento of what was once painted in the boldest of colors. Christianity has simply lost *it*. It no longer articulates the ideal. Sex is on the loose. Shame days are over. The Devil has absconded with sin.” As Twitchell laments, “Go and sin no more” has been replaced with “Judge not lest you be judged.”

Demonstration of this moral abandonment is seen in mainline Protestantism’s surrender to an ethic of sexual “liberation.” Liberal Protestantism has lost any moral credibility in the sexual sphere. Homosexuality is not condemned, even though it is clearly condemned in the Bible. To the contrary, homosexuals get a special caucus at the denominational assembly and their own publications and special rights.

Evangelicals, though still claiming adherence to biblical standards of morality, have overwhelmingly capitulated to the divorce culture. Where are the evangelical congregations that hold married couples accountable for maintaining their marriage vows? To a great extent, evangelicals are just slightly behind liberal Protestantism in accommodating to the divorce culture, and accepting what amounts to “serial monogamy”—faithfulness to one marital partner *at a time*. This, too, has been noted by secular observers. David Blankenhorn of the Institute for American Values remarked that “over the past three decades, many religious leaders . . . have largely abandoned marriage as a vital area of religious attention, essentially handing the entire matter over to opinion leaders and divorce lawyers in the secular society. Some members of the clergy seem to have lost interest in defending and strengthening marriage. Others report that they worry about offending members of their congregations who are divorced or unmarried.”

Tied to this worry about offending church members is the rise of the “rights culture” which understands society only in terms of individual rights rather than moral responsibility. Mary Ann Glendon of

the Harvard Law School documents the substitution of “rights talk” for moral discourse. Unable or unwilling to deal with moral categories, modern men and women resort to the only moral language they know and understand—the unembarrassed claim to “rights” which society has no authority to limit or deny. This “rights talk” is not limited to secular society, however. Church members are so committed to their own version of “rights talk” that some congregations accept almost any behavior, belief, or “lifestyle” as acceptable, or at least off-limits to congregational sanction.

The result of this is the loss of the biblical pattern for the church, and the impending collapse of authentic Christianity in this generation. As Carl Laney laments, “The church today is suffering from an infection which has been allowed to fester. . . . As an infection weakens the body by destroying its defense mechanisms, so the church has been weakened by this ugly sore. The church has lost its power and effectiveness in serving as a vehicle for social, moral, and spiritual change. This illness is due, at least in part, to a neglect of church discipline.”

The mandate of the church is to maintain true gospel doctrine and order. A church lacking these essential qualities is, biblically defined, not a true church. That is a hard word, for it clearly indicts thousands of American congregations who long ago abandoned this essential mark, and have accommodated themselves to the spirit of the age. Fearing lawsuits and lacking courage, these churches allow sin to go unopposed, and heresy to grow unchecked.

John Leadley Dagg, the author of a well-known and influential church manual of the nineteenth century, noted, “It has been remarked, that when discipline leaves a church, Christ goes with it.” If so, and I fear it must be so, Christ has abandoned many churches who are blissfully unaware of His departure. ■

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# The Wonderful Truth of the Trinity

by Henry M. Morris

*“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”* (1 John 5:7).

The above text is the clearest and most succinct statement of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Bible, but also probably the most controversial verse in the Bible. Many authorities believe it was not in John’s original epistle, but was added by some ancient copyist. Consequently, although it is in the King James Bible, most modern English translations omit it. There are others (including this writer) who are convinced it *was* in the original and should be retained.

In any case, the truth of the Trinity is taught in many other passages of the New Testament and does not depend on this particular verse. It is undoubtedly the most distinctive doctrine of the Christian faith. Most religions are either pantheistic (e.g., Buddhism) or polytheistic (e.g., Hinduism). Two other religions are monotheistic (Judaism, Islam), but only Christianity recognizes the one real God (the Triune God—Father, Son, Holy Spirit)—one God in three Persons.

The sacred book of the Muslims—the Koran—regards Jesus as only a prophet, repeatedly denouncing as infidels all those who believe in the Trinity. The Jews often consider Jesus to have been a great teacher, but no more than that. To the Christian, however, the Lord Jesus Christ is a person yet God incarnate, God’s only begotten Son—Creator, Saviour, King of kings and Lord of lords. Christians also believe that the Holy Spirit is not just a spiritual influence, but a real person, the third Person of the Godhead.

When an individual becomes a Christian, he acknowledges it by being baptized

in the “*name* [note, just a single name] *of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (Matt. 28:19). He believes in one God—but not the unknowable, unapproachable “god” of Islam called “Allah.”

Instead, he recognizes God as the infinite, invisible, omnipresent Father, but also as the Son, the visible, touchable, yet perfectly holy Word always revealing and manifesting the Father, and as the Holy Spirit, always present to guide, convict, and comfort. He is very real—eternal and invisible, omnipresent Father of all, yet visible and approachable through the Son and experienced and understood in the Holy Spirit.

Majestic mystery, but wonderful reality!

Christians believe in the Trinity—one God, not three gods, but three divine Persons, each equally and totally God. We cannot really comprehend this with our minds, but we can believe it and rejoice with our hearts. It is somewhat analogous to the “space” of God’s created universe. Space is comprised of three dimensions, each of which permeates all space. This structure is helpful to illustrate the nature of the triune God. That is, God is one God, not three gods. Yet He is revealed as three Persons, each of which is eternally and completely God.

This great truth appears again and again in the Bible—especially in the New Testament, of course. But one can also discern it here and there in the Old Testament.

For example, note Isaiah 48:16: *“Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD and his Spirit, hath sent me.”* Note here that the Son, the divine Word who is speaking, is being “sent” into

the world by the Father and the Spirit.

But turning again to the New Testament, it is rather remarkable to note how all three Persons of the Godhead are significant in so many phases of the Christian life. First, as noted, the believer is baptized in the one Name but in every Person (Matt. 18:19) of the holy Trinity.

Then, as he begins his Christian life, all three are still actively involved. *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (Heb. 9:14).

The actual event of salvation requires a miraculous creation, with the believer undergoing “regeneration,” and thus being “born again.” This tremendous miracle is indeed accomplished only by the working of all three Persons of the Godhead. As Paul wrote, *“God sent forth his Son, . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father”* (Gal. 4:4-6).

The Apostle Peter also noted the action of every Person of the divine Godhead in the great work of saving those who trust in Christ: *“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:2).

An extremely important part of the Christian life from its very beginning is that of prayer. That also is accomplished daily with each person of the Trinity participating. *“For through him [that is, through Christ the Son] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father”* (Eph. 2:18). When we pray, we normally pray to our heavenly Father (not to Jesus or the Holy Ghost). God, of course, can hear a sincere prayer, regardless of how addressed, but we should know that we are really coming through the Lord Jesus and in His good name by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Note Matthew 6:9

and John 14:13.)

Once we have been born again by the regenerating miracle of the Holy Spirit, our bodies become His temple. But this also means that the triune God Himself is there through the Spirit. We can be *“strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in [our] hearts by faith; . . . that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God”* (Eph. 3:16, 17, 19).

This was also implied in Christ’s original promise that He would send the Holy Spirit. *“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, . . . for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. . . . At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him”* (John 14:16-18, 20, 23).

At that time, Christ also promised that the Holy Spirit would teach us, and that this also would involve Himself as well as the Father. *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things”* (v. 26). The pervasive content of His teaching would, of course, concern the Lord Jesus Himself, as directed by the Father, *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me”* (15:26).

Thus, in a wonderful sense, the triune Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—one and all live in each Christian believer, teaching, strengthening, convicting, comforting, and guiding him in answer to his prayers. This is the marvelous truth of the Trinity.

Keep in mind that there are three real Persons in the Godhead, not just three ways in which God reveals Himself. The Son prays to the Father, for example, and the Father sends the Holy Spirit when the

Son returns to heaven.

Perhaps it is significant that the word *Godhead* appears just three times in the New Testament, each from a slightly different, though essentially synonymous Greek word. The first occurrence of “Godhead” is in Acts 17:29. “. . . *we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.*” That is, no one can make a model of our three-in-one God—neither any kind of graven image nor some kind of philosophical construct.

But it seems that God Himself has made such a model. “*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead*” (Rom. 1:20). This is the second mention of “Godhead.”

That is, the creation itself can be seen as a model of the three-in-one Godhead. This remarkable fact cannot be discussed in the limited space here, but will be elaborated in more detail in the *Back to Genesis* section of the December issue of *Acts & Facts*.

The physical universe is, in a very real

sense, a trinity of trinities. Also, in a certain sense, human life is a trinity of body, soul, and spirit.

In fact, tri-unity in various ways is often seen in the creation (but note that a “trinity” is not an entity composed of three individual parts, like the sides of a triangle, but rather an entity of three parts, each of which is the whole).

Thus, although no man could ever model the Godhead, God has seemingly done this in His creation. But then the third mention of the Godhead is given in Colossians 2:9. “*For in [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*” Thus, the Lord Jesus can say to His disciples: “. . . *he that hath seen me hath seen the Father*” (John 14:9), for He Himself is “*the image of the invisible God*” (Colossians 1:15).

We can close with one more Biblical mention of the Trinity: “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all*” (2 Cor. 13:14). ■

—From *Back to Genesis* (No. 203) November 2005. Used with permission.



## The Modest Neckline

by Iona White

I remember some dripping hot southern Indiana days, during my early teen summers, when my mother was teaching me how to sew. One memory I have is seeing a certain marking on a pattern cautioning that this pattern was so much of an inch below the neckline. Now many summers have passed, but with the fading of time so has there also been the decline of the neckline and I see such notes no more.

The Christian woman today who wishes to wear a new dress is confronted with a challenge from the world. If she goes to the department store, she is greeted with

an array of clothing most of which is meant to bring attention to her figure, capitalizing of course upon the low neckline. Because most of the garments are so low-necked, and because there is so little of the plain, innocent, old-fashioned neckline, this lady can face pressure—will you not buy this one? It is not as low as the others; many of your friends wear them like this.

Let us say that this Christian lady loves Jesus deeply and has a sensitive heart to what pleases Him. She shakes her head “no” and leaves the store with a perplexed

look on her face. She needs another dress. She does not know much about sewing, but could she perhaps learn? In her heart there is a growing determination.

After some more thought and prayer, her steps lead to the fabric shop. With delight she picks out a lovely turquoise flowered print, and then she sits down at the pattern books. The perplexed look returns. Most of these patterns are actually sensual in appearance. But suddenly she finds one pattern that looks pretty good. She buys it, goes home, and patiently works through the steps of the pattern, perhaps with the help of a friend. Finally, after much perseverance, she tries on her new dress. The reflection in the mirror shows a successful job, and looks very nice . . . except it shows more pale flesh around the neckline than she would once have allowed.

Many ladies are giving in to the devil's ultimatum here. He says, "You can't find anything better." They look at friends who have given in, and they submissively wear the dress they found at the store, or the one they made.

But, dear friend, let us consider what victory the enemy gains when a "Christian" lady succumbs to this new standard of dress. The devil is pleased with the suggestions he can make as she sits in church in a row in front of some unsuspecting gentleman. The lower neckline makes good breeding ground for the devil's thoughts. And let us turn our eyes away in embarrassment as that poor lady kneels at the altar, seeking to rid herself of the gathering spiritual clouds, for as she kneels there the woman, who is "just doing what everyone else does," would blush if she realized what others must look away from.

Ladies, it would be wise to visit the mirror and consider what others may be too discreet to mention. Bend over, as you would at various tasks you might perform before others—washing the table, painting a room, picking up a small child. As you bend over, don't forget to check the back

of the neckline as well.

"But," you say as you look up from the mirror in dismay, "what can I do? The stores don't offer much in modest necklines, and almost all the newer patterns are low, even if they look about right in the advertisement. What can I do?"

First, let us refuse to surrender to the enemy. If that pretty dress at the store has a lower neckline than we are used to, let's just refuse to even consider wearing it. Let us settle it in our hearts that this subject is not up for debate with the enemy.

Secondly, let us consider that our lady was on the right track when she turned to her sewing machine. Let us realize that the enemy was only making a last effort, when her dress turned out with a lower neckline. She has not lost the battle.

Here are some simple suggestions that may help:

1. Wear a purchased collar over the dress, or buy a blouse at a resale shop and cut it off to be used as a dickey.
2. Sew darts in the front and/or back of the neckline.
3. Look in resale shops for older, more modest patterns.
4. Alter the neckline when cutting out the next dress.
  - a. Add needed amount along the neckline of bodice front and bodice back.
  - b. Add the same amount along the neckline of the front and back facings.
  - c. If the pattern has a collar—when front and back bodice are sewn together at shoulders, measure distance around the neckline, not including seam allowances. Then adjust the length of the neckline on the collar to match.

Let us not surrender our adornment of holiness to the enemy. Modesty is beautiful, becoming, and pleasing to Jesus. We are giving up a rich treasure when we settle for the devil's substitutes. ■

—From *The Evangelist of Truth* October 2005. Used with permission.

# Reverence in Worship

by Dale Eby

Reverence is a word seldom heard outside the church setting. It may be we have forgotten the word even in the church setting. Man's sole purpose for existing is to worship God. It is the most important obligation given to man. Reverence is a feeling of profound awe, respect, and love which in worship translates into a high level of respect and love for God. It is a deep respect and love that moves us to live in obedience. A humble and submissive spirit allows us to hear from God and be reverent worshipers. The Bible says in Psalm 89:7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Am I interested in checking my level of reverence in the house of the Lord?

There are actions in worship that impact the level of reverence we show for God. Coming into the sanctuary quietly says "God is here" and it allows Him to begin speaking to us. Noise can be a deterrent to worship and can be very irreverent to God. Noisy toys, squirming children (and adults), talking, and even whispering hinder someone from giving God their fullest attention. We are called to assemble ourselves together and it is here that God meets us corporately as we are quiet before Him. We rob God of worship due Him when our noise distracts others from meeting Him. What a shame and sin to keep God from being worshiped because of noise distraction. The "noise" we make needs to reveal we are here for that one purpose. Psalm 100:4 says, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." This "noise" directs a person toward God. Approaching God was serious business at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19). It was not a time of foolish hilarity and fun

but rather an extremely serious, yes, even life or death situation. Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 instructs us to "keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God," to keep thy mouth, and to keep thy vows. God requires a heart aware of His presence. "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10) is in order at our church meetings.

Reverence comes when we are aware we are in the presence of God. When Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord in the temple (Isaiah 6) he responded with reverence toward God which included recognizing his own undoneness, listening to the voice of the Lord, and consciously and willingly doing what the Lord wanted. Does our noise level deter us from giving God the proper reverence during our public gatherings?

There are other actions that impact the level of reverence for God in church services. Suppose you were invited to the Oval Office of the President of the United States. If your actions were the same as some actions of church members in church, do you think the President would allow you to stay very long? If you sat slouched, daydreamed, looked at the ceiling and then the floor, and stared out the window, sighed, slept, had your cell phone ring as some do at church, or were bored enough to go make an exit and return halfway through the meeting as some habitually do during the sermon, should you be allowed to stay?

In John 2:15 Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple. Do you think He has ever felt like driving you out of the house of worship because of your lack of reverence for Him? Matthew 15:7, 8 says, "Ye hypocrites, . . . This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips but their heart is far from

me.” We cannot afford to fall into this category because of our irreverence in the house of God.

Communion, baptism, and hopefully wedding services, are considered serious times. “Less important” services are no excuse to be irreverent by our actions or dress. Psalm 89:7 says, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.” Arriving ten minutes early instead of ten minutes late is not only respectful to those in charge of the service but allows us to physically and mentally prepare for worship. A feeling of profound awe, respect, and love for God does not happen without meditating on Him. Being quiet and meditating a bit before the service begins will lead us into a spirit of reverence. Coming with a humble and submissive spirit shows reverence for the one we call our Lord. Praying for the release of this week’s burdens makes room in our hearts for hearing God. The Bible says to bring our thoughts into captivity. We know the flesh will war against the spirit even in church. Resist the devil. Open the songbook and your Bible when directed to do so. Ponder the words, sing, and follow along. Think on the things of God. This is the least we can do in reverence to our God.

The way we dress in times of worship impacts and reveals our level of reverence. People used to go to church “dressed up.” Now the trend is more “dress down.” If we were invited to the Oval Office of the President of the United States, a tee shirt, jeans, and an orange cap would be out of place. Going to a wedding with the same attire would say this event is not very important. A sloppily dressed serviceman in a rusted-out service truck, with tools and supplies in total disarray, says something about his company and the job he is to do. What about when we come to worship? God condemns vanity and show, yet clothing reveals something about us. It

reveals first of all who we are joined with. Are we joined with the world? Our dress should remind us of whose we are. Dress reminds others that we are more God-centered than self-centered. God is not bothered by someone coming in from the community dressed in work clothes. What I believe God is bothered with is the casual thoughts about worship that shows in the way “growing Christians” are dressed. If there is ever a time to be dressed in our best, it is when we come to meet our God in corporate worship. You can tell a lot about a congregation’s view of God by their dress. Is God merely a buddy or is God one to be feared and revered? If God is merely a buddy beside us, instead of a God above us, sin will pale in its seriousness. The level of reverence for God, as well as our theology about God Himself, will change as the trend to “dress down” continues.

Being a willing participant in the worship service shows reverence for our God as well. The abilities God has given to us are to be used. It is disrespectful and an offense to the Holy Spirit if we refuse to be involved in the work of the church. It is irreverent for us to be a mere bench-warmer. Sing, follow along in the Bible, pray as we are led in prayer, be involved wherever you can be in the work of the church. The worship service is not a spectator sport. Each time we enter the house of the Lord we need to choose to meet God there and to reverence Him by giving Him respect, love, and the promise of obedience.

Checking our level of reverence in worship is to help us be more pleasing to God. When reverence in worship becomes unimportant it means our relationship with God is changing. Leviticus 19:30 says, “Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.” May God be patient with us. ■

—From *The Mid-Atlantic Informer* September 2005. Used with permission.

# How Strong Is Your Faith?

by David L. Burkholder

In the third chapter of the Gospel of Mark there is an intriguing narrative concerning Jesus' healing of a man with a withered hand. Within that account there are several lessons. Faith, trust in God, stands out as perhaps the most observable. Let's look at the scenario.

The Scripture says that Jesus "*entered into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.*" Immediately we see the potential conflict: the crippled man, the Healer, and the accusing Pharisees brought into the arena together.

The Pharisees were already carefully watching Jesus at this point in His ministry, setting His actions in contrast to their interpretation of the Law. They saw Him as a threat to the establishment, and were eager to do away with Him. Jesus, in spite of their threats, continued "to be about His Father's business," healing, casting out demons, and ministering in various ways to hurting mankind. There in the synagogue that day we witness the converging of opposing ideologies—stringent adherence to man-made law vs. sympathy for the needs of mankind whatever the time or circumstance.

Notice how this hapless cripple was thrust unwittingly into the midst of conflict. Jesus called him to center stage and then demanded of the Pharisees an answer regarding what was permissible on the Sabbath. The cripple had no doubt come to the synagogue to worship quietly. Can you imagine his anxiety when he realized he was about to be dragged into a situation charged with potential conflict? He immediately became the focus of attention. He became the catalyst in a conflict of ideologies.

Jesus' burning question, "What is lawful on the Sabbath?" stirred anger among the Pharisees. They were on the spot. They were afraid to answer. They were trapped. The situation was electric. Jesus waited, then commanded the cripple to stretch forth his hand.

The moment of truth had come. The man's hand was withered, useless. Healing was being offered. But it demanded an extreme exercise of faith and carried a certain measure of risk. Not only was his faith on the line but his loyalties as well. The attention was on him. Was he willing to side with Jesus and face the ostracism that would certainly follow from the religious leaders? Was he, perhaps, wishing he had not come to the synagogue that day after all? Could he be sure his faith was equal to the task, the impossible task of stretching out that withered, useless hand? Can you imagine the turmoil in his mind as he weighed his response? Was he afraid that he, too, might become the object of the Pharisees' wrath by being a willing participant in this unfolding drama? Jesus' command burned in his ears, "Stretch forth thine hand." Time stood still. Eyes were on him. Everyone waited. The situation was tense. There he stood, a cripple waiting to be healed, in the midst of a hostile crowd, a battle raging within his heart.

Then, in a rush of trust, with no heed to the onlookers, or thought to personal concerns, he stretched out his hand. And it was healed—made completely whole, just like his other hand. His faith was rewarded, his fears overcome, his trust strengthened. Can you imagine the joy in his heart as he left the synagogue that day and hurried home to tell family and friends of his good fortune?

Not so the Pharisees. They immediately ganged up with the Herodians to

plot to kill Jesus. How sad that they missed the blessing of the cripple. How sad that they spurned the lesson of compassion from the Son of God. How sad that they missed the lesson of faith and trust as exhibited by the man with the withered hand. How sad, indeed. But let's forget the Pharisees. They were hopeless. Let's look instead at the lesson of faith.

Can you imagine the struggle of faith that might have gone through the cripple's mind as he contemplated Jesus' command to stretch out his withered hand? How could he do this impossible thing? All these years that hand had been useless. He had not been able to move it. Could he now? What if he failed? Why didn't Jesus just reach out and touch it and restore it to wholeness? Yes, why didn't Jesus take hold of it and stretch it out? Why was He asking the impossible? And then, what of the crowd? Could he stand the condemnation of the Pharisees which was sure to follow? Would he be put out of the synagogue? Excommunicated? ostracized, despised, or even killed?

But faith overcame fear. Trust, that corollary of faith, supplanted uncertainty. And God performed a miracle. G. Campbell Morgan said, "The moment you obey, God makes over to you the resources of His power." When the cripple exercised faith, God performed what the man alone could not. It works the same for us. God rewards faith. When we place our trust firmly in His command, His power comes into play in our experience. The power to perform lies in obedience to His command. We exercise faith, we act on that faith, and God responds. We can experience the performance of faith today just as the cripple did that day in the synagogue.

We must remember, though, that God will not do for us what we can do for ourselves with His enablement. Yes, Jesus could have touched the crippled hand and restored it without any outward act of faith on the man's part. But He forced

him to act on his faith, to so trust His command that He was willing to become an active participant in his own healing. And that strengthens faith. Our action is the observable part of faith. For instance, you approach a bridge with a posted weight limit. You're well under the limit and immediately believe (express faith) that the bridge will hold you. However, it is not until you actually start across the bridge, placing your trust in the bridge, that faith becomes real. Faith is only valid when acted upon. There is no growth, no strengthening, without the exercise of faith.

Has God ever asked you to do something impossible or illogical? And, if so, has He ever failed to honor your trust as you acted in obedience to His commands? Joshua, near the close of his life, recounting God's dealings with the children of Israel, said: "*Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.*"

Can you trust God's promises? Can you depend on Him to act in response to your faith? Certainly. Unequivocally. Always.

Another interesting aspect of the exercise of personal faith is also seen in this passage in Mark's Gospel. At times our faith and trust in God is strengthened, not by personal experience, but as we observe the exercise of faith worked out in the lives of others. In the verses immediately following the healing of the cripple, we notice that the crowds followed Jesus after they *heard* what great things He had done. He healed. He cast out demons. And the word spread, and others also came in an exercise of faith to be healed. Their faith was in response to the trust others had placed in Jesus for healing and deliverance. They observed. They believed.

Our lives, the exercise of our Christian commitment, our trust in God, our

obedience to His commands—all influence others. Faith in action does produce results, often beyond the immediate circumstance. So faith comes full circle. We believe (faith). We act (trust). God performs. Our faith is strengthened in response to His fulfillment, our faith is increased (and others' faith is challenged). With strengthened faith we trust Him more fully. And then God acts again. It becomes an upward spiral of Christian growth and a developing, trusting relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

How will you respond the next time your faith is on the line? When perhaps in unsympathetic surroundings God commands you to “stand forth, stretch forth your hand”? Will you hesitate, or will you put your faith into action by a positive response to His command? At that moment, don't look around at misunderstanding or hostile onlookers. Don't look within at your fears and trepidations. Look straight into the eyes of Jesus, and in a

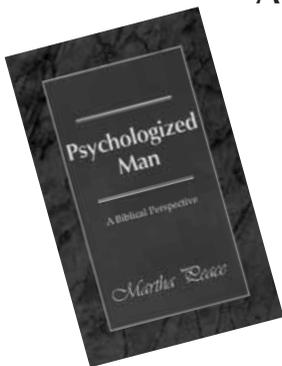
trusting exercise of your faith, “stretch forth your hand.” You will discover in that instant God's response. His power will become operative in your experience, and you will enjoy the rush of His favor.

Also, never minimize the influence of your faith on the lives of others. The Scripture says that “no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” Our lives do impact others. The positive exercise of our faith can have a strengthening effect on others as well as on ourselves.

Just how strong is your faith? Strong enough to act when God commands action? Unless it is, it is no faith at all. It is just like the man's hand—withered, limp, dead, useless. Only when faith is supported by trust (action) is it living and useful. Let's prove our faith in God's promises by acting at His command. *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without action is dead also.”* An acting faith is a living faith, a strong faith. ■

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# Proper Pew Manners

by Darrell Haldeman

For many of us, gathering in church has been a regular occurrence from our earliest recollection. With activities of habit, it is possible to follow the routine without identifying the principles that govern the practice.

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). While this verse is not specifically addressing activities inside a church building, three of these principles do apply there. First, that our worship is to “the living God” verifies the sovereignty and holiness of God. Second, that our gatherings are “in the house of God” portrays the need for reverence for God’s house and holy things. Third, the expression “how thou oughtest to behave thyself” establishes personal responsibility and accountability for our conduct at church.

When we assemble for church, an attitude of reverence should always prevail. Because of this reverence, we must regard the worship service as a formal gathering. Thus our attire, speech, and very demeanor should follow formal practices and resist casual expressions.

Let us consider proper pew manners as we follow the order of a church service. As families enter the church building, our speech should be in subdued tones. Our goal is to move promptly toward the auditorium and be seated in preparation for the anticipated worship service. Where should we sit? Consider the benefits of first filling the benches near the front. Sitting toward the front eliminates many distractions for us and also spares the ushers the need of directing persons toward the front near or after starting time. If we are the first on

a pew, we should sit toward the middle so others need not ask us to move. It is helpful for parents to seat children so as to have them in their peripheral vision. Resist the temptation to turn around and, as parents, require the same of your children. The minutes until starting time are an excellent time to pray, meditate, and read the Scriptures.

When the song leader rises to lead the singing, quietly select the appropriate songbook. Listen intently for the number, and then quietly leaf to it. We should guard against our young children paging randomly through hymnals to minimize “wear and tear” on the pages. When the singing is concluded, *place* rather than *drop* the books into the rack.

As the devotional leader announces the passage for consideration, we should find the reference and follow after, and see that our children do the same. Kneeling in prayer should be accomplished without needless bumping and shuffling. We should close our eyes to avoid distraction as well as to concentrate on the prayer being offered. Whispering and note passing are irreverent. After prayer, we should quietly take our seats.

When the minister rises to bear the message, a prayer should rise from our hearts to God for him and for our own receptivity. While this part of the service can seem long to children, what is it to us? It likely is what we make it or allow it to be. We should turn to the references and follow the reading, trace the continuity of the thought, and meditate on the theme. Maintaining eye contact with the speaker is important. We want to be modest and reserved in response to illustrations that have elements of humor. Giving recognition and comprehension of spoken truth inspires the minister.

We may become weary in this time

span. If drowsiness presses, asking a person seated nearby to give a reminder is a help in staying awake. Taking notes has blessed many in keeping their minds alert and has helped them to follow the sequence and inspiration of the message. This even helps young school-age children find added meaning and purpose in our services.

There will be times that Mother lays her hand on little Janet's leg, reminding her to remain turned forward, or Father taps Jacob on the knee, reminding him to keep his feet off the bench or stop swinging his legs.

When the janitor rises to do a task, or little children become fussy and cry, or persons leave the service for legitimate reasons, our attention should not be diverted from the speaker. Our reverence and propriety can help others to rein in thoughts and avoid distractions, or our lack of reverence will hinder others in their worship.

Parents should not allow children to use the restroom or get a drink simply as a diversion. Chewing gum in church is irreverent and should be foreign to the

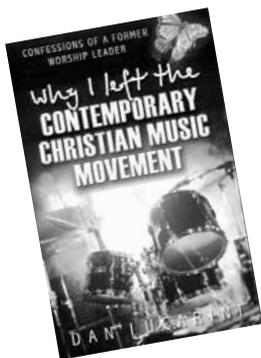
Christian. Church services are not the proper time for grooming the hair or manicuring the hands and fingernails. Formality and reverence prohibit the removing of footwear during the service except for the ordinance of footwashing. Slouching down or leaning forward with the head down or propped on the knees indicates boredom and invites drowsiness. Knowing grins and subtle communication in the audience is a distraction not only to those involved but also to the speaker.

When we stand for the benediction, we should maintain the spirit of worship. After the service, our conversations and the conduct of our children should be suitable for the house of God.

One day Jesus upbraided merchants at the temple for making the house of prayer a den of thieves because of improper conduct there. As Jesus assesses our services, does He find a house of prayer and reverence? Do our pew manners enhance our worship to our worthy Lord? ■

—From *The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*  
October 2005

## Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement



by Dan Lucarini

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# The Ten “Lost” Tribes Weren’t Lost

by Elwood McQuaid

The phrase *the lost tribes of Israel* emits a certain ring of mystery that romanticizes the disappearance of the Israelites taken captive by Assyria in 722 B.C. Although the phrase is nowhere in Scripture, it is indispensable to a false teaching known as British-Israelism.

British-Israelism, or Anglo-Israelism, came into existence more than 150 years ago. Richard Brothers (1757-1824), an Englishman, is given the dubious distinction of originating this method of biblical interpretation. It is a theological anti-Semitism that contends the Anglo-Saxon people are, in fact, Israel, and consequently, the true heirs of all of God’s promises to the Jewish nation.

British-Israelism rests on four erroneous postulates:

## ***The Four Main Falsehoods***

1. *Not a single Israelite remained in the land after Assyria deported the ten northern tribes of Israel.*

It is essential to British-Israelism that this statement be historically true. Furthermore, none of the Israelites thereafter could have mixed with Judah or returned to the southern kingdom. Accordingly, British-Israelism teacher Herbert Armstrong (1892-1986) stated, “When the southern kingdom of Judah was taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the Assyrians had migrated northwest—and the ten-tribed Israelites with them! Utterly lost. They were utterly gone! They were lost from view!”

Again he declared, “The house of Israel did not return to Palestine with the Jews in the days of Ezra and

Nehemiah, as some erroneously believe.” With the decline of the Assyrian Empire, he said, the tribes began to wander westward across northern Europe and eventually lost their identity. Later they became the Saxe, or Sythians, who subsequently moved through Europe and eventually invaded England as the Saxon people.

2. *The British are Israelitish Ephraim, with the fledgling United States later installed under the mantle of Manasseh, thus fulfilling Jacob’s prophecy regarding Joseph’s two sons in Genesis 48.*

In this relocation process, David’s throne was supposedly transferred from Jerusalem to England. Armstrong endorsed a concept by Herman L. Hoeh: “Elizabeth II actually sits on the throne of King David of Israel—that she is a direct descendant, continuing David’s dynasty—the very throne on which Christ will sit after His return.” Other devotees identify biblical Bethel with Glastonbury, England, and Jerusalem with Edinburgh, Scotland.

3. *Israel (the ten northern tribes) is forever distinguished from the house of Judah (Jews), which has been left under a permanent curse emanating from the idea that it was Judah and Levi who put Christ to death saying, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25).*

Therefore, say British-Israelism advocates, the terms *Israel* and *Jews* or *Judah* are never used synonymously in the Bible. When *Israel* is referred to, it always indicates the ten northern tribes; *Jews* or *Judah* are exclusively the southern tribes.

4. *All of the divine promises to Israel*

*find fruition in God's blessings on England and America, which will prepare the kingdom and deliver it to Jesus Christ. The occupant of the throne of England will relinquish the seat of authority to Christ, thus completing the process of the restoration of Israel.*

### **The Biblical Truth**

To begin with, Israel was never lost! Certainly the Jewish people have wandered far and wide across the face of the earth, and evidences of their religion and culture have been deposited and endure. However, to cite these evidences as confirmation of the British-Israel hypothesis is preposterous.

The Scriptures and corroborating historical records widely confirm that the majority of the northern tribes' population never left Israel at all. Ephraim and Manasseh *did not* move to England and America, portions of the northern tribes *were* assimilated by Judah, and Israel and Judah eventually fused as one national entity.

### **All Israel Was Not Taken Captive**

Israel's demise and subsequent deportation are recorded in 2 Kings 17. The chapter, however, lacks specifics concerning who was carried away by Assyria.

It is claimed that the statement "the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah only" (v. 18) suggests the nation was removed in its entirety. However, this verse must be applied contextually, like such statements as "all Israel went to battle" and "all Israel appeared before the Lord."

All of Israel did not go to battle; only the military went. Nor did every Israelite appear before the Lord; only those who constituted a proper representation appeared. So it was in the case of Israel's going into captivity.

Other Scriptures confirm the deportation was partial and restricted to the ruling political and military class. In fact, during the reign of Judean King Hezekiah, who came to the throne in 715 B.C., seven years after Sargon II of Assyria conquered Israel, many from the north moved to Judah at Hezekiah's invitation (2 Chron. 30).

In 622 B.C., more Israelites came to Jerusalem to help repair the Temple. Even later, Hezekiah issued a Passover invitation from "Beer-sheba even to Dan . . . throughout all Israel and Judah" to the "children of Israel . . . who are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria" (2 Chron. 30:5, 6). In response, many came to Jerusalem, "even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover" (2 Chron. 30:18). Also, "all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel" (2 Chron. 30:25) participated in the feast.

Eighty years later, Josiah led Judah through a period of religious revival. In the process of repairing the Temple, monies were collected from "the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin" (2 Chron. 34:9). By then many pious Jews from the northern kingdom had moved to Judah to escape contamination from the heathen people whom the Assyrians had settled in Israel.

Further documentation of this partial deportation comes from Sargon II himself: "I besieged and conquered Samaria, led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants of it." Estimates of the northern kingdom's population at that time range from 400,000 to 500,000, meaning only 5 percent of the population was deported, primarily the leaders from the area around Samaria.

The captives settled to the northeast,

around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In 612 B.C. the Babylonians under Nabopolassar destroyed the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Thus the northern exiles joined their Judean brothers under the rule of the Babylonians and later the Persians. Some were among those who returned to Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Cyrus, king of Persia, ruled the territories formerly held by the Assyrians. He decreed that all Jews “throughout all his kingdom” who wished to return and help rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem were free to do so. At the dedication that followed the exiles’ return, Scripture records,

*And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, and offered at the dedication . . . twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel (Ezra 6:16, 17).*

The New Testament records that individuals in the first century still maintained their tribal identities—some of whom were members of the so-called lost tribes. For example, Anna, who beheld the baby Jesus in the Temple, was “of the tribe of Asher” (Luke 2:36).

Israel unquestionably remained in the region of its inheritance without a massive and mysterious exodus into Europe.

### ***Synonymous Terms***

With the Babylonian Captivity came the dissolution of a dual national identification for Israel. The divided kingdom ceased to exist, and *Israel* and *Judah* became synonymous terms frequently used to identify the entire host of Jewry.

British-Israelism heatedly denies this indisputable fact because its entire system of interpretation hinges on its being correct on this point.

Walter Martin, in his book *Kingdom of the Cults*, fully exposed this fallacy: “After the Babylonian captivity, from which the Jews returned, Ezra records the remnant were called by the name of *Jews* eight times, and by the name *Israel* forty times. Nehemiah records eleven times they are Jews, and proceeds to describe them as Israel, twenty-two times.”

The New Testament is no less emphatic. At Pentecost, Peter addressed himself to “all the house of Israel” (Acts 2:36). In this one chapter alone, “Jews” (v. 5), “men of Judaea” (v. 14), and “men of Israel” (v. 22) are mentioned, followed by the reference to “all the house of Israel.” Later, referring to his Jewish brethren, the Apostle Paul spoke of a common promise and a common hope, “unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God day and night, hope to come” (Acts 26:7).

James addressed his epistle “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1).

Walter Martin observed further, “The New Testament used the word *Jew* one hundred and seventy-four times.” The promoters of British-Israelism are shamefully guilty of attempting to manipulate the Bible in order to make an untenable position appear factual.

### ***Ephraim and Manasseh Are Not England and America***

Ephraim and Manasseh are prominent in Scripture. They are repeatedly said to have been in Israel following the captivities—not in London or New York. Ephraim is specifically identified and related to God’s future purposes for the Jewish people.

In Ezekiel 37, written during the Babylonian Captivity, the prophet looked forward to the official union of Judah and Israel. He was directed to symbolize this event by placing two

sticks together “for Judah, and for the children of Israel . . . and they shall become one in thine hand” (vv. 16, 17). When pressed by the people for an explanation, Ezekiel said,

*Thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, to which they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all (vv. 21, 22).*

The context leaves no doubt that the scattered tribes would return to the Israel of the Middle East. Ephraim shall be gathered “from among the nations, to which they are gone, and [I] will gather them on every side, and

bring them into their own land” (v. 21). The people who have been scattered through the torturous dispersion will be gathered out of the nations and brought back to the land of promise. This is a marked contrast to the British-Israel fantasy that has Ephraim at home in his English “Promised Land,” waiting to deliver the kingdom.

Clearly, no dark mystery shrouds the true identity of the Jewish nation. All segments of Jewry are represented in the people historically identified as Jews. British-Israelism is but one more weapon in the satanic arsenal brought on the scene to bring confusion and diversion and to promote anti-Semitism among another generation of professing Christians. ■

—From *Israel My Glory*, September/October 2004. Copied with permission of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099

## Separated Unto God

by J. C. Wenger



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# Why Is Missions So White?

by Bill Commons

It is the “elephant in the room.” Everybody sees it, few acknowledge it, and nobody wants to talk about it. But it is HUGE—and a major obstacle in mobilizing believers for global ministry.

It we do interracial ministry overseas, why aren’t we interracial in our missionary teams? Is missions only for Anglos? Why do we conduct monocultural missions to a multicultural world? Could it be (shudder) the “R” word? Nobody wants to admit to racism.

Unfortunately, prejudice is part of our American heritage. Many of our churches are so white that minorities feel unwelcome. The “Jerusalem Ministries” of our constituent churches to their communities seldom proactively seek to reach minorities and to become multicolor churches.

The ends of the earth are now on the street where you live. But we flee to the suburbs and fear the immigrants the Lord of the harvest has graciously brought to our streets. It is now possible to reach most of the world’s unreached peoples without ever leaving our shores, but most of our churches don’t have the heart for it. “That’s what we pay our missionaries to do.”

The first New Testament church to send out church-planting teams to the nations (Acts 13) had a leadership team composed of Barnabas, a church-planter from Jerusalem; Simeon, who was called Niger (likely a black African immigrant); Lucius from Cyrene, a blue-blooded Manaen (who rubbed shoulders with the politically power-

ful); and Paul, the hotheaded, Christian-persecutor who claimed conversion and became an evangelist-intern. What a combustible mix of cultures, races, ethnic groups, and political backgrounds the Holy Spirit used to launch the first international church-planting movements!

Increasingly, our constituent churches are awakening to the adventure of reaching the total community and becoming what God intended—beautiful snapshots of the global church Christ is building around the world. These churches are enjoying the kind of colorblindness (or, better yet, celebrating the beauty of racial diversity) that spawns a passion for reproducing similar churches through multicultural missions teams that will effectively penetrate mixed communities everywhere with Calvary’s love.

Minority missionary prospects look at missions and wonder why we are so white. They will believe we are sincere in inviting them to join our ranks when they see more people of color on our boards, our office staffs, and our field teams. It is beginning to happen, but we have a long way to go.

It is past time to demonstrate convincingly to a skeptical world that we have left in the dust the racial preferences of the past, and enthusiastically embrace colleagues from every people, tongue, and nation—in our home communities and in the world beyond. ■

—From *www.abwe.org/message*. Reprinted with permission from the *Message*, Spring 2005.

# Who Would Enjoy Heaven?

by Steve Krings

Most people, when asked their preference, say they would rather go to heaven than hell after they die. I will assume for the moment that this is your choice as well.

Let's set to one side the question of how a person can be sure they will go there. It is an important one, because as has been said frequently, "Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people." No one just "happens" to end up there.

What I would ask, however, is this. Would you really enjoy heaven?

At first this may seem like a ridiculous question to ask. After all, is not heaven called "paradise"? (Luke 23:43). Also, are we not told that there God will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Rev. 21:4)?

Yes, all that is true, and I suppose that this is why people think they would be happy in heaven. Who wouldn't want to be eternally free from sickness? Who wouldn't want to be assured that all those things which caused them such grief and sorrow in this life will be forever gone?

Then, why would many people not enjoy heaven? The first reason is because the central focus of heaven is God Himself. It is not a me-centered, man-centered world. People there will be taken up with worshiping and praising God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This description in Revelation 7:11, 12 shows this clearly. "They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

"So what? What's your point?" someone asks.

The point is this. The only ones who will ever enjoy heaven are those who on this earth have already begun to love to worship God!

Do you enjoy, each day, spending time praising God for who He is and what He has done? Do you, (as God instructs us to do), meet regularly with others who love to worship God? Do you love to sing His praises and join with others at prayer meetings to speak to Him? Do you delight in listening to God's Word explained in a clear and reverent way?

If not, then you would not enjoy heaven! These kinds of activities of worship will be central there. Don't fool yourself. You are not ready to meet God. You are not prepared for heaven.

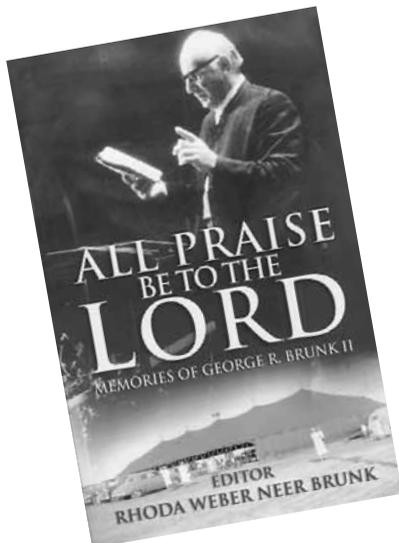
In fact, there is no one who is born loving these things. None of us naturally enjoys worshiping God. None of us would enjoy or go to heaven, unless God first changes us!

This is what being "saved" is all about. God brings us to hate and repent of our sins against Him. He brings us to trust in His Son Jesus for complete forgiveness. And He gives us a deep and lasting desire to worship and praise Him forever. Then we are ready for heaven! Are you? ■



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