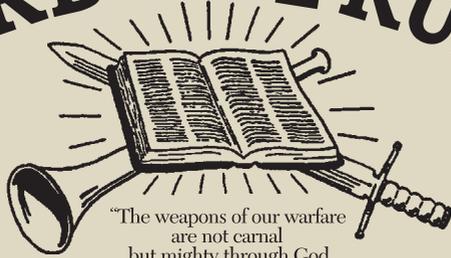


The SWORD and TRUMPET

“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



JOHN ELIOT

DECEMBER 2006

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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:

John Eliot (1604-1690)

John Eliot was born 1604 in Widford, Hertfordshire, England, to a yeoman farmer (one who cultivated his own land) who belonged to the Anglican Church.

In 1622, at the age of 18, Eliot graduated from Jesus College in Cambridge and became an assistant teacher at a grammar school in Little Baddow near Chelmsford, operated by Rev. Thomas Hooker. While working at the school John learned about Hooker's Nonconformist ideas and embraced them. Nonconformists operated outside the realm of the state church and normally held to a believers' church. They were subject to prosecution by the government for such beliefs.

John was eventually ordained by the Church of England but due to his Nonconformist beliefs he felt he should leave England for the New World. Sailing in 1631 at the age of 35 he landed in Boston, Massachusetts, where he worked for a year. Then he established a church in nearby Roxbury. He pastored the church there for 58 years from 1632 till his death in 1690.

While in Roxbury he established a good relationship with the Narragansett Indians as well as other tribes whose languages were similar. Eliot was concerned for their eternal souls as well as their living conditions.

Prior to this time Catholics from Spain (Columbus in 1492) and France had already established mission works in the New World by the time English Protestants set foot in Virginia and then Massachusetts. The charters of both Jamestown and the Massachusetts Bay Colony mentioned the need and desire for propagating the Gospel among the Indians. Some who came to the New World though, were more interested in commercial and financial gain. Others went so far as to exploit the Indians. However, Alexander Whitaker of Jamestown and some of the Pilgrims from Massachusetts tried to preach to the Indians but Indian wars hindered the process.

In 1644 Eliot had the opportunity for which he had been waiting. He crossed paths with a young Indian who was working as a servant in an English home. The Indian agreed to teach John his language and after two years of study Eliot finally felt prepared to preach his first sermon in his new language to the Pequot tribe who were camped west of Boston. These Indians were interested in Eliot's message and after repeated visits many accepted Christ as Lord and Saviour. They soon became known as the "praying Indians." John's concern for their souls also showed itself in the practical outworking of the Gospel. He established new towns for them referred to as "praying towns," encouraged them to build permanent homes rather than being nomads, to wear clothes, to find jobs, and to have a basic form of self-government for each town.

News of Eliot's work spread and ministers and others sent money to help with this ministry. As a result the first non-Roman Catholic mission agency was begun, known as the *Corporation for Promoting and Propagating the Gospel Among the Indians of New England* in 1649. For two hundred years Eliot's model of missions to the Indians prevailed.

(continued on page 10)

Why Was Jesus Born in a Barn?

by Joe McKeever

I grew up on a farm. I know about barns. They are dirty and cold and the last place you'd ever want to bring a newborn baby. And yet, here is the Lord of heaven and earth allowing His Son—even willing Him!—to be born in a dirty stable. What are we to make of this?

I am certain there must be a hundred reasons why Jesus was born in that stable in Bethlehem, and just as sure that we know only a handful of them. The simplest answer is that there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the local inn. But there has to be much more to it than that.

One: It Was the Only Place Available

Jesus could have been born in the finest mansion, but it was not made available to Him. He goes where He is made welcome.

You will see it all through Scripture: *“When you enter a city,”* Jesus told His disciples, *“whoever does not receive you or heed your words, shake the dust off your feet.”* They were not to give God's truth to the hostile or disrespectful, for to do so would be *“casting pearls before swine.”* God goes where He is wanted.

Sometimes when I'm making this point to children I'll ask them the old riddle: “Where does the 600-pound gorilla go?” They call out, “Anywhere he wants to!” And you would think that would be the answer to the question, “Where does the Lord of heaven and earth go?” But it isn't. Listen to the Lord Jesus: *“I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hear my voice and opens the door, I will come unto him and will sup with him and he with me.”* Tell me if that is not the most amazing picture in

the Bible—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, humbly asking us to receive Him. He does not force Himself on anyone, but goes into homes and hearts where He is made welcome.

Two: God Was Making a Statement About Himself

Jesus is not like any other royalty you've ever heard of. Kings come with great entourages, accompanied by pageantry and demands. Jesus was born in a stable to humble Jewish parents, with His only callers that night lowly shepherds. Look closely: God is telling us something about Himself.

Nothing about our God is like the kings of the earth. They're into appearances and image; God is all about truth and love. Over a century ago, the British pastor Charles Spurgeon* said:

“How could the kings of earth receive the Lord? He is the Prince of Peace, and they delight in war! He breaks their bows and cut their spears in sunder; He burns their war-chariots in the fire.

“How could kings accept the humble Saviour? They love grandeur and pomp, and He is all simplicity and meekness. He is a carpenter's Son, and the fisherman's companion.

“How can princes find room for the newborn Monarch? Why, He teaches us to do to others as we would that they should do to us, and this is a thing which kings would find very hard to reconcile with the knavish tricks of politics and the grasping designs of ambition.”

The prophets of old had said of the Messiah, *“Behold, your king is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey.”* One day, the Lord Jesus entered

Jerusalem in just that way: the King of kings and Lord of lords—riding on a burro. Not very grand or impressive by our standards. It's like forgoing the limo and entering town astride a bicycle.

Had Jesus employed image consultants, they would have advised Him to take a cue from Absalom, the son of David, who rode around the city in a chariot pulled by a team of horses and accompanied by fifty runners. Like modern rock stars, David's boy knew that the size of the entourage said volumes about the celebrity. But Jesus was not like any other "star." Anyone doubting that has only to see how Jesus was born (in a stable), how He lived (without a place to lay His head), and how He died (on a Roman cross, the object of slurs and slander and saliva).

Three: Where Else Should a Lamb Be Born?

In the early days of the human race, Cain brought vegetables to the Lord as an offering, while his brother Abel brought a lamb. One lamb for one person. Later, as God was preparing to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, Moses instructed the people to kill a lamb and smear its blood around the door to protect the family members. One lamb for a family.

Then God gave Israel instructions for the annual Day of Atonement offering. One lamb would be slain for the nation. Eventually, in the New Testament, we see John the Baptist announcing that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Someone has said the entire story of redemption is summed up in three lines of Scripture:

"Where is the lamb?" (Genesis 22:7).

"Behold the Lamb!" (John 1:29, 36).

"Worthy is the Lamb!" (Revelation 5:12).

Years ago, my seminary professor, Malcolm Tolbert, wrote an article asking and answering the question why Jesus was born in a stable. Had Jesus been born in the mansion on the hilltop, Tolbert said, few people would have felt welcome in His presence. But He was born in a barn; anyone can come there. The lowly shepherds did not hesitate to enter a stable and bow before the Child. Then and now, anyone willing to humble himself may come to Jesus. ■

Dr. McKeever pastors First Baptist Church of Kenner, Louisiana.

*Source for the Spurgeon quote: *The Christ of Christmas* by James Montgomery Boice, Moody Press, 1983, page 64.

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FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR *SWORD & TRUMPET*

God has faithfully supplied the needs for the ongoing publication of this magazine. The subscription rate covers only a portion of the expenses. This has been intentional to allow those on limited incomes to have access to the material. The difference between the subscription income and the actual costs has historically been made up by the faithful gifts of God's people so that the *Sword & Trumpet* has been able to operate "in the black." Now as we draw near the end of 2006, we again ask you to stand with us by financially supporting this ministry. May God bless you as you give.

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

Looking Toward the Future

As we approach the end of another calendar year of God's grace, it is important to finish well. The year 2006 has been productive and fulfilling for the ministry of *Sword and Trumpet*. We have been encouraged by readers' responses indicating that the message, warning against the encroaching apostasy, is getting through. It is also becoming obvious that the readership of *Sword and Trumpet* is divided into three age groups—those over 70, those under 40, and the “in between.” Unfortunately, those least interested in our message are the “in between.” It seems that many of those in the 40 to 70 age bracket have been lulled to sleep theologically by that which is easy on the ear rather than facing the hard truth. Therefore, while not neglecting the older readers, we are planning to focus on reaching the under 40 “set.” Most of these have children at home or have

plans for marriage and children. They are concerned for their homes and the spiritual future of their children.

Beginning the new year with the next issue, *Sword and Trumpet* will not only take on a new look but the approach will be redirected. The position and message, that have been heralded through this magazine since 1929, will not be changed. Only the wrapper and the methods of communication will be altered. New features are being planned with some younger writers. The content will continue to be biblically solid, polemic, apologetic, literary, and informative.

As we launch this new phase of literature ministry, we plead for your consistent prayer support. Pray for the editors. Pray for more subscribers. Pray for funds to go forward. While praying, ask the Lord what part He wants you to play in all of this.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

DECEMBER 3, 2006

Who is Jesus Christ?

Colossians 1:15-23

The lessons for the winter quarter focus on Jesus, His person and work. December's lessons identify Him as the Son of God, co-Creator with the Father, sustainer of the universe, Redeemer, head of the church, Light of the world, exalted in glory. Today we look at who Jesus is, identifying the peculiar characteristics which set Him apart from all others.

We notice in the verses preceding our lesson text that Paul, in addressing the Colossian church, refers time and again to "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul was intent on emphasizing Christ's oneness with the Father, and His absolute sufficiency as the Saviour of man. His purpose was to stabilize them in their faith as a bulwark against the ever threatening heresies of the day. (Likely Gnosticism, as inferred from Paul's arguments.)

Paul states in verse 15 "that Christ is the visible representation and manifestation of God to created beings" (Vines). To Him is also ascribed the honor of the firstborn, co-equal with the Father and ruler over all creation. Furthermore, by Him were all things created—heavenly, earthly, visible, invisible, thrones, dominions, powers, everything. And not only by Him, but for Him, for His glory and His honor as Creator. He is also the sustainer of creation, the One who holds all things together in perfect harmony of purpose.

Turning then (v. 18) from Christ's

work in the material universe, Paul also affirms Him as head of the church, the one who gives guidance and direction to the spiritual body. His position and prominence here are the result of His resurrection from the dead—a feat no mere man could accomplish. This further identifies Him as the divine Son of God, in whom "all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (2:9 NASB). He was fully God, and completely man.

Verses 20-22 present Christ's redemptive work. It was the shedding of His blood on the cross that provided the means for sinful man to find peace with the holy God. The message of the cross is that through Christ's sacrifice man can be reconciled to God, his sins put away, and a new relationship established.

Man in his natural state is alienated from God, his sinfulness separating him from the holiness of God. But now, through the redemptive work of Christ man can be presented holy, blameless, and without reproach before God, the heavenly Father.

But there are conditions for man to meet. He must "continue in the faith." He must be "grounded and settled" in his belief in Christ. And he must allow nothing to move him away from the hope proclaimed in the gospel which he has heard and accepted. Consistency is the theme, perseverance the mode, and stability the goal. Paul gives advice in these areas in verses 9-13 preceding our lesson text.

Paul also assures the Colossian believers that this gospel which they have heard is the true and only gospel which has been preached in its purity in all the world. It is therefore the only trusted

safeguard against the threatening heresies of the day. He concludes by lending his apostolic authority to its authenticity.

For thought and discussion

1. Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to study the background of the Colossian church and the false teachings which threatened it.
2. If someone asked you who Jesus is, would you be able to give a complete and adequate answer? (This lesson should help.)
3. Why is the doctrine of the divinity of Christ so central to the life of the church? Think it through.
4. Be sure you understand anew “the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary.” What was His motivation? Think through and discuss the implications for mankind.
5. What are ways we can guard against subtle, and not so subtle, heresies that confront the church today? What are they? Discuss.

DECEMBER 10, 2006

The Supremacy of Christ

Hebrews 1:1-14

Today’s lesson parallels last Sunday’s in many ways, speaking of the nature and work of Christ. Today’s lesson focuses primarily on the superiority of Christ over prophets and angels as God’s full and complete revelation to man. Hebrews was written to Jewish believers with the (unknown) author’s intent to strengthen his readers’ faith in Christ as the all-sufficient One and, consequently, to help them guard against spiritual decline or apostasy. The writer uses many Old Testament references throughout the book which would have been familiar to his Jewish readers. He uses these references to point to and portray

Christ as the fulfillment of God’s revelation to man. Christ is God’s last word to man.

Hebrews, unlike other New Testament epistles, does not begin with a greeting and a blessing, but with an abrupt declaration of the supremacy of God’s Son. The writer declares that God has continually spoken to His people—in the past through the prophets at various times and in varying ways; now, in the present age, through His Son. This Son, by whom the world was created, will also eventually inherit all things and thus rule over all things.

This Son is an exact representation of the Father, expressing His glory, imaging His person. And, having accomplished the work of redemption by His death on earth, is now ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of the majesty on high (see Hebrews 10:12). Because of His position as Son, He is far superior to the angels who are created beings. Verses 5 and 6 portray the supremacy of Christ over the angels. The angels’ position requires them to worship the Son.

But are the angels insignificant? By no means. They are God’s messengers, standing by in the heavenly courts, ready to do His bidding (see also verse 14). In contrast to the servant role of angels, the Son holds a kingly position, ruling over all with a scepter of righteousness. This scepter is the symbol of His imperial authority and sovereignty, and righteousness the earmark of His kingdom.

Verses 10-12 speak of the eternal quality of Christ, the Son. He created the heavens, but He will outlast them. The created world will experience decline and decay, but Christ will remain the same (see 13:8). These verses also hint at the consummation of the age when God will visit the earth with destructive judgment.

Verses 13 and 14 reiterate the status and function of angels. At no time did God elevate them to a position of royalty,

or as rulers over others. They are ministering servants, sent to earth to minister on God's behalf to those who have experienced the salvation secured by the Son. Their ministry continues to the present and will continue as long as the earth stands, for God's people are continually in need of protection and assistance. The angels are servants of God, but the Son is the only begotten heir to the heavenly throne. He is the full and effulgent expression of the Father God. And He is our Saviour and King.

For thought and discussion

1. It will help you to understand Christ and His work better if you read the entire Book of Hebrews. Notice the very descriptive and poetic language as you read.
2. As an adjunct to this lesson do some study on the ministry of angels.
3. Do you have a full picture of the many roles of Christ? Be sure you understand His person, His position, and His function.
4. This world is on a collision course with destiny. How would you explain to an unbeliever the decline of the natural world and what this means in light of God's overall plan?
5. How does God speak to us through His Son today? Explore.

DECEMBER 17, 2006

Christ, the Light of Life

1 John 1:1-2:6

It is difficult to refute the testimony of an eyewitness. That which they have seen, heard, or handled leaves an indelible impression on their mind and senses. As the Apostle John opens this letter in which he portrays Christ as the saving Light of the world, he assures his readers that what he writes is from personal experience and observation, not second-

handed hearsay.

John's desire was to proclaim the Word of life to his readers and thus establish both their and his joy, and provide therein the avenue for mutual fellowship. Union with Christ also provides horizontal union among those who have individually embraced faith in the Word of life. John's argument here in the opening verses was also designed to refute the claims of Gnosticism which stated that Jesus was not fully human.

John goes on in his discourse to portray the great gap between the light that God is and the darkness that encompasses the world. He makes it plain that one cannot walk in the darkness of the world and claim to have fellowship with the God who is Light. There is absolutely no compatibility. In fact anyone claiming to do such, John says point blank, is a liar. But if we walk in God's light and have experienced cleansing from sin through Christ's blood, we can have fellowship with Him.

Some there are who claim to be exempt from sin, or to never have sinned. Such, John says, are deceived, for God declares all men under sin. Not only are such persons deceived, they, by their declaration, make God out to be a liar, which is an impossibility. There is no truth in such persons, no word of life. But if one acknowledges his sin, confesses and pleads forgiveness, he will be cleansed from his unrighteousness.

John's aim in writing was to instruct and encourage his readers to live above sin. It is possible as he implies by the encouragement to "walk in the light" and to maintain constant fellowship with God. But we are not perfect and, in spite of best intentions, at times we fail. Instead of giving up, we should heed John's instruction to accept the provision of Christ as our advocate with the Father—the sinner pleading for mercy with a holy God through the propitiatory offering of the blood of His Son.

For the person who consciously walks

in obedience to God's commandments, there is a soul-satisfying assurance of his relationship to Him. The key to this assurance is willing obedience, not a forced restraint to a set of standards. The keeping of God's Word is not burdensome to the one who is determined to please Him out of gratitude for the work of cleansing He has wrought in his life.

The result, and proof, of this life of obedience is demonstrated by a manner of life that evidences oneness with Christ. It is also a life that demonstrates the love of Christ, both inwardly and outwardly. Christ, the Light of life not only lights up the life of the one who experiences His saving grace, He also causes that one to reflect that light outwardly to others.

For thought and discussion

1. What makes the testimony of the apostles in the scripture of such importance?
2. Study the descriptions of Christ in this passage—Life, Word, Light, Advocate.
3. In our isolation from the world do we at times lose sight of the terrible darkness which holds the world in its grip? Reflect again on the great contrast between the darkness of the world and the blazing light of God. Is there any question which side you want to be on?
4. Do we excuse sin at times because we know we have a righteous advocate? What are the dangers in such an attitude?
5. What is the key to assurance of our relationship with God? How is this fleshed out in daily living?

DECEMBER 24, 2006

The Word Became Flesh

John 1:1-18

PAGE 8

This lesson's focus is on Christ, the preexistent One, Son of God, Creator, Redeemer. He is depicted here in John 1 as Word and Light. As the Word, He is God's communication to man. As Light, He illuminates God for man. To fulfill these functions He took of human form and lived among men, showing by His life and teaching the way for men to become sons of God. This lesson focusing on Christ's incarnation, carries special significance as we remember at this Christmas season His coming to earth as a baby to become man's Saviour.

The first several verses in our text speak of Christ's eternal quality and creative work. In the beginning of recorded time, He was there. And all things were made by Him, as we have already noted in several preceding lessons. Furthermore, in Him was embodied the light of life for all mankind. This light of life shined into a dark world and overcame that darkness though the darkness attempted to extinguish it.

To reveal this God-man to the world into which He came, God provided a herald, a man, John the Baptist. John played a unique role as the forerunner of the Saviour. He recognized his subservient position and sought no honor for himself. His function (vv. 8, 15) was to bear witness to Christ as the One sent from God to bring the light of life to mankind (read also verses 19-34).

Unfortunately, many of those to whom He initially came, those who supposedly were waiting for their Messiah, rejected Him, refusing to accept His claims or John's testimony that He was the One sent from God. However, not everyone rejected Him, and for those who accepted Him in His role as Saviour, He opened the way for them to become sons of God. What a privilege! And that privilege extends to mankind in all ages, as long as the world stands (v. 9).

Verse 14 reiterates the message of 1 John 1:1 and 2 which we studied in last Sunday's lesson. John emphasizes here

SWORD AND TRUMPET

the humanity of the Word, God's communication to man. John was a companion of Christ and an eyewitness to His glory—both on the Mount of Transfiguration and following His resurrection. To his personal, eyewitness testimony, he adds that of John the Baptist who also bore witness to the divinity of Christ and His eternal character (v. 15).

John (the writer) expresses (v. 16) the blessings we receive when we accept this Christ and His work. By God's grace we receive blessing upon blessing—the gift of eternal life, forgiveness of sin, the removal of guilt, fellowship with God and with fellow believers; all this, and also the hope of heaven. John also contrasts the superiority of the grace and truth received through Christ, with the Law given by Moses (v. 17). Christ brought to man a more personal spiritual relationship than was possible under the Law.

Jesus also brought another new experience to man. In the Old Testament God was shielded from view of man on pain of death (Exodus 33:20). Now, the only begotten Son of God, God in the flesh, God in human form, has come to earth to reveal God to man (see John 14:7-11).

For thought and discussion

1. Focus again on the quality of Jesus as light. What does light do? Where is its source? How is light descriptive of Christ?
2. What was the signal value of John the Baptist's announcement ministry? Be sure to note his humble, self-depreciating attitude.
3. Why did the Jews of Jesus' day find it so hard to accept Him for who He was? What lesson does that carry for us in regard to revealed truth?
4. The Incarnation of Christ is called a cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. What does that mean, and why is it so all-important?
5. Allow the impact of Christ's Incarnation to fill you at this season with "all joy and peace in believing."

DECEMBER 31, 2006

From Humility to Exaltation

Philippians 2:1-11

In the lessons for December we have identified Christ, His person, position, and work. Today the focus shifts somewhat to ourselves as we are challenged to put on the mind of Christ, to conform our lives and attitudes to His life and attitudes. Here in the Philippian letter, Paul shows how Christ willingly suffered humiliation as a prelude to His exaltation. And while the primary focus is still on Christ, the example of His life is given as a challenge for those who follow Him to exemplify His character in their lives.

Verses 1 through 4 in our text speak to life in the Christian community, the mutual fellowship, and the harmonious accord possible only through a Christ-like mindset, which he describes in verses 5-8. Paul here encourages like-mindedness which will come as the consequence of an humble attitude and proper disposition toward others.

Strife and self-seeking cause division and disunity which are out of harmony with those professing to follow Christ. Christ's followers, rather, are to seek to help others and elevate their interest above one's own (see also Romans 12:9, 10). Paul states (v. 2) that to hear this is happening in the brotherhood at Philippi will bring him great joy.

Then in verses 5-8 Paul goes on to describe the mind or attitude of Christ. Though God, He did not feel it a hardship or a threat to His divinity to take on human form for a season in order to fulfill the redemptive plan of God. As man, He humbled Himself to the point of death on behalf of man. It is difficult for us to grasp "the love that drew salvation's plan [and] the grace that brought it down to man!" Such humble giving of self is not easy, yet Paul encourages believers in this passage to take on this attitude which Christ so willingly exemplified.

The story doesn't stop, however, with Christ's humiliation. It ends with His exaltation (v. 9). In fact, God the Father has highly exalted the Son and given Him a name of honor above all others. It is to this One that every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess His Lordship. "Through self-denial and obedience Christ won sovereignty over all peoples" (*Ryrie Study Bible*).

As people bow before Christ, acknowledging His sovereignty and Lordship, God the Father receives honor and glory. The Father God is satisfied with the sacrifice of the Son and pleased with the relationship this creates between His Son and now-justified mankind.

We are here today on the threshold of a new year. What better way to begin a new year than to determine to take on the mind of Christ and to live selflessly and cooperatively within the Christian brotherhood. Imagine what strides the church of Christ would make should every believer determine to so live. And imagine also, the great joy this would bring to our heavenly Father as He observes His children following the lifestyle of His Son. The challenge is ours. Will you accept it?

For thought and discussion

1. What principles are essential for harmony in the Christian community? This should generate some profitable discussion.
2. Why is it so hard to esteem others above oneself? What is at stake?
3. Try to imagine, if you can, the implications for Christ to take on humanity. Why did He do it?
4. The implication in verses 10 and 11 is that, eventually at least, every knee shall bow and acknowledge Christ as sovereign Lord. Some do this in this life. Others will do it at the judgment. It should be clear which group to be in.
5. Through the lessons this month have you gained a better picture of Christ? If so, then bow before Him in adoration and thanksgiving. ■

JOHN ELIOT . . . cont'd.

John's efforts did not stop there. He established schools for Indian children and adults as well as an Indian college. Indian men were sent to Harvard where some became preachers. In addition to his oversight of all these activities he also kept up with his pastoral duties and regularly visited the settlement in Natick where the first church building for Indians was established (1660) with the first Indian pastor.

During the 1660s Brother Eliot was also busy writing, translating, and publishing in the Algonquin language. His accomplishments in this area are as follows: creating an Algonquin alphabet; Catechism (1653); some of the Psalms; New Testament (1661); the entire Bible (this was his greatest work, and *the first Bible ever to be printed on the American continent* in 1663); *Indian Grammar* (1666); New Testament revision (1680); and Old Testament revisions (between 1682 and 1685). He also printed Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* and Bayly's *Practice of Piety*. His other writings include *The Christian Commonwealth* (1659) and *The Harmony of the Gospels* (1678).

Brother Eliot also became an advocate for the Indian population by seeking to help them work out problems dealing with property rights, pleading for clemency for Indian prisoners, working against Indians being sold into slavery, and securing lands and streams for the use of the Indians. He also had occasion to work among the Black population.

By 1674 there were fourteen new "praying towns" settlements with approximately 4,000 converts. However, in 1675 and 76 war broke out when an Indian chief named King Philip attacked the colonists in Massachusetts resulting in the deaths of several thousand colonists and the destruction of half the towns in the colony. Most of the "praying Indians" did not participate in this war but suspicions ran high and they were imprisoned on an island in Boston Harbor for two years.

(continued on page 16)

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

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

Escalating Violence in Afghanistan

Violence in Afghanistan has ramped up in recent weeks. Tuesday (9/24) a Taliban suicide bomber killed 18 people outside the compound of a provincial governor. Another suicide bomb the same day killed an Italian soldier and an Afghan child. Two weeks ago, militants assassinated another provincial governor. As a result of this increasing violence, NATO is requesting additional troop commitments from its member countries. The NATO Secretary-General indicated that procuring such commitments would be the next meeting's top priority. A plan approved Thursday placed an additional 12,000 U.S. troops under NATO command, the largest number under foreign command since WWII. —Sources: *ABC News* and *AP*

Lenovo Recalls Laptop Batteries

Lenovo (which recently bought IBM's personal computer division) recalled 526,000 ThinkPad batteries made by Sony which have the potential to burst into flames. Several instances of Dell laptops spontaneously erupting into flames promoted Dell to recall 4.1 million Sony-made batteries. Similar problems caused Apple to recall 1.8 million Sony-made batteries. —Source: *AP*

China Fires Lasers at U.S. Satellites

For some time, China has been firing

powerful ground-based lasers at U.S. surveillance satellites as they pass over Chinese territory. This is an old concept that the Soviets used, but is nonetheless quite worrisome for the U.S. as it totally blinds satellite surveillance upon which the U.S. heavily relies.

—Source: *London Telegraph*

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez Bloviates

Chavez said in New York City at the United Nations of George Bush, "Yesterday, the devil came here. Right here. Right here. And it smells of sulfur still today." In the past he has called America a terrorist state and has pleaded with other nations to bring down America. He has said he would back Iran in any military conflict with the U.S. and supports Iran's nuclear program. In the past he has broken legal contracts with American oil companies and taken over Venezuelan oil fields legally owned by multinational corporations. 7-Eleven has decided to drop Citgo (the Venezuelan state-owned oil company) as the supplier of its gasoline. (Definition of *bloviate*: speak bombastically; to speak at length in a pompous self-aggrandizing way)

—Sources: *NewsCentral.tv* and *AP*

Chicago Girl Dies at Dentist

A five-year-old girl died after being given sedatives via three methods: intravenous, oral gel, and nitrous oxide gas.

The dentist required the girl's mother to leave the room for the procedure and when she returned half an hour later, her daughter wasn't breathing.

—Source: *AP*

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Gas Prices Fall; Politicians Blamed

It seems that no matter what happens, conspiracy theorists will always blame politicians and big business. When gas prices were high, those who didn't understand the free-market system of oil markets attempted to postulate that it was a big oil conspiracy to pad profits. Now that gas prices have fallen as low as \$1.76 a gallon (in Jackson, MO), conspiracy theorists are suggesting that politicians are dropping prices to raise satisfaction ahead of the upcoming election. Such theories ignore the obvious that politicians don't have control over oil prices (except by selling from the Strategic Oil Reserve, which hasn't been done).

—Sources: *MissouriGasPrices.com* and *AFP*

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U.S. to Seek More Sanctions for Syria

U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, said in a recent interview with the *Wall Street Journal* that as Syria continues to defy international calls to sever its ties with terrorist groups, the U.S. is pushing for increased sanctions against Syria. Israeli Vice Premier Shimon Peres said that Syria is protecting one of the most dangerous terrorists in the Middle East, Khaleed Mashaal, and blames him as one of the largest obstructions to peace with the Palestinians.

—Sources: *Jerusalem Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *YNet News*

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Trial Adjourned After Saddam Misbehaves

Saddam has been irrepressibly unruly at his (and six co-defendants') genocide trial. So much so that the chief judge

ejected every last one of them and adjourned the trial for two weeks. This is the second day in a row that the trial degenerated into a shouting match and Saddam was ejected.

—Sources: *ABC News* and *AP*

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Nagorno-Karabakh Releases Baptist Soldier From Jail

NAGORNO-KARABAKH/BUDAPEST (*BOSNEWSLIFE*)—A Christian soldier who was imprisoned in the troubled unrecognized republic of Nagorno-Karabakh for refusing to swear the military oath and carry weapons on Biblical grounds, has been released, after spending one year in jail, *BosNewsLife* learned Monday, September 25.

All kinds of officials have told us he will be sentenced again—and that next time the sentence will be harsher, Baptist pastor Garnik Abreyan told *Forum 18 News Service* from Stepanakert, capital of the unrecognized republic of Nagorno-Karabakh in the South Caucasus.

—Excerpt from “Nagorno-Karabakh Releases Baptist Soldier After One Year Jail,” *BosNewsLife* and *WorthyNews*

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China Court Sustains Appeal, Releases Christian From Labor Camp

A Chinese Christian leader that was arrested and sentenced to “re-education through labor” in March won an appeal and was released. This is virtually unprecedented for China's Communist system.

—Sources: *BosNewsLife* and *WorthyNews*

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Why Darwinism Is Doomed

So after 150 years, Darwinists are still looking for evidence—any evidence, no matter how skimpy—to justify their speculations. The latest hype over the “brain evolution gene”

unwittingly reveals just how underwhelming the evidence for their view really is.

The truth is Darwinism is not a scientific theory, but a materialistic creation myth masquerading as science. It is first and foremost a weapon against religion—especially traditional Christianity. Evidence is brought in afterwards, as window dressing.

This is becoming increasingly obvious to the American people, who are not the ignorant backwoods religious dogmatists that Darwinists make them out to be. Darwinists insult the intelligence of American taxpayers and at the same time depend on them for support. This is an inherently unstable situation, and it cannot last.

If I were a Darwinist, I would be afraid. Very afraid.

—Excerpt from *WorldNetDaily* op-ed column by Jonathan Wells, Ph.D.

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Pastor Sued for Excommunication

A lady in Texas is suing her pastor because he suggested that his congregation excommunicate her for an unrepentant affair she was involved in. She claims that it was a breach of his ethics as a professional counselor to reveal what she had told him. A lower court dismissed her case, but she appealed it to the Texas Supreme Court which is now hearing the case. Since 1871, the U.S. Supreme Court has held that courts cannot regulate such inner church workings in a legal principle known as “ecclesiastical abstention.” When she joined the church, she agreed in writing to submit to church discipline, including Matthew 18:17, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.” She is arguing that she told the pastor about the affair in the context of his being a professional, licensed counselor who is legally bound (and is outside of ecclesiastical abstention) to maintain confidentiality. —Source: *New York Times*

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House Republicans Pass Anti-Abortion Measure

House Republicans just approved a law that will make it a federal crime to assist a minor in crossing a state line to evade a state’s parental notification law (wherein an abortion clinic must notify the parents of a minor if that minor receives an abortion). It has yet to pass the Senate.

—Sources: *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Los Angeles Times*

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House Republicans Pass Act Protecting Freedom of Religious Expression

Conservative groups are commending the U.S. House of Representatives for passing a bill on Tuesday that would cut off financial awards for lawsuits successfully filed against religious displays on government property.

The Public Expressions of Religion Acts (PERA) (H.R. 2679) would deny the awarding of attorneys’ fees or monetary damages to a party that wins an Establishment Clause court case—that is, one based on the so-called “separation of church and state.” Backers of the legislation note that local and state governments often give in to demands to remove religious displays for fear of incurring costly attorneys’ fees.

—Excerpt from “House Approves Act Protecting Freedom of Religious Expression.” *Agape Press*. Jody Brown.

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Bloggers Join Bush at Bill-Signing

A bill that establishes a database of government spending was signed September 26. This bill was pushed through by the conservative bloggers of PorkBusters, a group that tries to point out and eliminate wasted government spending. These bloggers were invited to the White House to join President Bush as he signed the bill. —Source: *Washington Times*

What Child Is This?

by James A. Goering

He is the Son of God, and the Son of Man. He is 100% divine and 100% human—the 100% God-Man by means of the miraculous union of the Divine and the human in the womb of Mary. Some dispute that such a union took place. They say that because Mary was of the sinful human race, such a union of the Divine and the human was impossible. And so they postulate that God created the Second Adam sinless, as He did the first Adam, and placed Him in Mary's womb. Only so, they hold, could He be without sin.

Such a view runs counter to the plain sense of several Scriptures. God told the serpent, "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*" (Genesis 3:15). This is the first prophecy of the coming Redeemer and His victory over Satan. Satan would bruise His heel, but the Seed of the woman would bruise Satan's head with a fatal wound. The Redeemer would come of the woman's offspring.

The second reference to the Redeemer is seen in God's promise to Abram: "*And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (Genesis 12:3). That was followed by this promise to Abraham: "*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee*" (Genesis 17:7). Paul, in Galatians 3, explains these promises as follows: "*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed*" (3:8), and, "*Now to Abraham*

and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (3:16). The Redeemer is therefore a descendant of Abraham.

A third reference to the coming Redeemer is seen in the promise to David through the Prophet Nathan: "*Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house . . . And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever*" (2 Samuel 7:11, 16). The psalmist adds: "*The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. . . . There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed*" (Psalm 132:11, 17). Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David*" (Luke 1:68, 69). And to Mary, the angel said, "*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David*" (Luke 1:32). The Redeemer, according to this announcement, is a descendant of David.

Enlarging on that announcement we read: "*Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David*" (Luke 1:30-32). Thus He is both the Son of God (*the Son of the Highest*) and the Son of Man (*of his father David*).

As to how this conception could be possible, the angel said to Mary, "*The Holy*

Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). This is a miracle of miracles, indeed. It is no less than the union of God with woman to produce the perfect God-Man. It occurred miraculously rather than in a natural physical sense as is the erroneous teaching of the Mormon Church. Holy Divinity and sinful humanity are joined, and the child that is born is holy, without sin. The Father is God, the mother is Mary. She is so designated by Elisabeth, who, filled with the Holy Spirit, said, "*Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*" (Luke 1:42, 43). Yes, she was His mother. Just as much as the child is the descendant of His Father, He is also the descendant of His mother.

The genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:23-38 traces His lineage all the way back to

Adam. Mary was the descendant of Heli (3:23), Heli of David (3:31), David of Abraham (3:34), and Abraham of Adam [and Eve] (3:38). Thus Jesus is that promised Seed of Eve, and of Abraham, through the direct bloodline reaching all the way down to Mary. It was through His mother Mary that Jesus received His humanity. "*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman . . .*" (Galatians 4:4).

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh. . . ." (1 Timothy 3:16). We need not explain it. Indeed, we cannot. But we can accept the clear testimony of Scripture regarding the source of His humanity. What child is this? He is the Son of Mary (the daughter of Heli), the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of Adam, the Son of God. With God all things are possible. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Life-Lines*, November/December, 2005.

Son of God, God the Son, Jesus Christ

by John F. Walvoord

The overwhelming biblical evidence for both the deity and true humanity of Christ makes it self-evident that in His person these natures so widely differing as to their attributes are nevertheless brought together into a personal union which will continue forever. Though Christ sometimes operated in the sphere of His humanity and in other cases in the sphere of His deity, in all cases what He did and what He was could be attributed to His one person. Even though it is evi-

dent that there were two natures in Christ, He is never considered a dual personality. The normal pronouns such as *I*, *You*, and *He* are used of Him frequently.

The hypostatic or personal union of the human and divine natures in Christ is given explicit divine revelation in at least seven major passages of Scripture (Phil. 2:6-11; John 1:1-14; Rom. 1:2-5; 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:14; and 1 John 1:1-3). These passages, which are studied in connection with other doctrines, make

it evident that the eternal Son of God took upon Himself a complete human nature and became Man. The act of Incarnation was not a temporary arrangement that ended with His death and resurrection but, as the Scriptures make evident, His human nature continues forever, His earthly body which died on the cross being transformed into a resurrection body suited for His glorious presence in heaven. The continuance of His humanity is reflected in such passages as Matthew 26:64, where it is stated that Christ will sit on the throne of His glory and return to earth as the Son of Man. The appearances of Christ after His resurrection also substantiate the continuity of His true humanity. When the women met Christ (Matt. 28:9), it is recorded, "They came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him." Mary Magdalene, according to John 20:17, actually clung to Christ in her joy at seeing Him after His resurrection.

Further evidence is found in the other appearances in His post-Resurrection ministry as well as in the fact of His bodily ascension into heaven (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:39-43, 50-53; John 20:22, 27, 28; Acts 1:1-11; 7:56). According to Philippians 2:10, the human name *Jesus* is continued in connection with the final judgment.

His humanity seems also to be essential to His work of mediation. According to 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus." The term "Son of Man," which Christ uses of Himself in Matthew 26:64 as describing His reign in heaven, is mentioned also in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14.

Though certain aspects of His mediatorial work will terminate according to 1 Corinthians 15:25-28, there is no indication anywhere in the Bible that His humanity will ever be terminated. By its very nature a human personality once brought into existence never ceases to

exist, and what is true of ordinary human experience is also true of Christ who became Man. His continuance as a human being in eternity seems to involve also the continuance of a human body. This is demonstrated, first, in the resurrection of Christ where His body was raised and prepared for heaven; second, in the fact of His ascension which was a bodily ascension into heaven; third, in the fact that He will return bodily to the earth; and fourth, that His body is a pattern of the body of believers who are raised or translated. There is every reason, therefore, to believe that the humanity of Christ will continue throughout all eternity to come. ■

Excerpted from John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, Moody Press, 1974. Used with permission.

—Reprinted with permission from *The Kindred Spirit*, Summer 2006.



JOHN ELIOT . . . cont'd.

They endured this wrong with patience, humility, and a godly spirit. However, this turn of events greatly impacted Eliot's work. The Indians were faithful to God but the spread of the Gospel slowed down to the place that by the middle of the eighteenth century only one believing family of Indians remained.

Undaunted by this disappointment Eliot continued to labor and tried to rebuild the work among the Indians to his dying day. All the while John was quietly going about his mission work, other religious groups were coming to the New World, including Mennonites.

Brother Eliot—a family man, Puritan pastor, and "the Apostle to the Indians"—was called to his eternal reward May 20, 1690, at the age of 86. It was said of him that there never was a truer, nobler, warmer spirit of a man than John Eliot. —Gail L. Emerson

“They Shall Call His Name Emmanuel”

by Glenn E. Auker

Many have pondered the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy regarding Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14). The Gospel of Matthew identifies our Lord as the fulfillment of this prophecy. Yet our Lord was known on earth as *Jesus of Nazareth*. Why then is it said “they shall call his name Emmanuel” (Matthew 1:23)?

The fulfillment of this prophecy concerning Christ is in the meaning of the name *Emmanuel*, “which being interpreted is, God with us.” In Jesus’ time, meanings of names held far more significance than they often do today. In recording the instruction of the angel to call His name Jesus, the account immediately focuses on the meanings of both *Jesus* and *Emmanuel*. Jesus was Emmanuel in that He fulfilled its meaning, “God with us.”

What truths can we glean from the Old Testament prophecy that our Lord shall be called Emmanuel?

Emmanuel foretells the virgin birth of our Lord. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah declared the coming of Emmanuel: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son” (Isaiah 7:14). Matthew records the fulfillment of this prophecy. The Babe born in Bethlehem and laid in a manger was no ordinary child; He was the only Child born without a natural earthly father. Thus, He alone was born without a fallen nature; He is the only perfect Son of man.

Emmanuel teaches that Jesus is divine. The angel of the Lord revealed to Joseph that “that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:20). The Babe in the manger was God with man. He was God incarnate, meaning that He was God in the flesh. Furthermore, the Angel Gabriel told Mary, “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Our Lord is the only begotten Son of God.

Emmanuel presents Jesus Christ, the

Son of David. The Gospel of Matthew repeatedly refers to Jesus as the Son of David, King of Israel. Even King Herod recognized the declaration of a newborn King of the Jews as applying to Christ (Matthew 2:4). *Christ*, the Greek form of *Messiah*, means “anointed one.” Foretold for centuries by the prophets, Christ was the anointed of God who would come and deliver His people. He is “the desire of all nations” (Haggai 2:7). With the unveiling of the New Testament, He is declared not only King of the Jews in Matthew but also King of kings and Lord of lords in Revelation.

Emmanuel alone was fitted to bring to fruition the meaning of His earthly name, Jesus. The angel’s direction to Joseph to call His name Jesus is immediately followed by the declaration that this was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming Emmanuel. *Jesus* means “Saviour.” Only as Jesus, the Word, was made flesh could He be the propitiation for our sins. Only as He was both the Son of God and the Son of Man could He pay the price for our redemption. The significance of Emmanuel to mankind shines more and more brightly as one considers first the manger; then the cross and the empty grave, and, finally, the lives of those who accept Emmanuel dwelling in them through the Holy Ghost.

Our desire to commemorate Christ’s coming to earth must be to focus on its spiritual significance rather than to follow the world’s commercialization of Christmas. We avoid the pagan traditions of society in order to dwell on the Holy One as revealed in the Scriptures. Truly, we must commemorate in all of life the coming of the One who is “God with us.” We do this by first receiving salvation through His blood and then following Him in discipleship. Then, on that final day, we will be with God eternally. ■

—Reprinted by request from *The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*, December 2005

The Divine Timetable

by John Coblentz

Did it ever seem to you that God's timing was a wee bit off? Or maybe a long way off? Consider the following Biblical events:

When the Israelites asked for deliverance from Egypt, God answered with a baby, who then had to go through 80 years of training before he was ready to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. By then certainly, many of those who had first prayed for deliverance were long gone.

When Abraham and Sarah prayed for a baby, God promised them descendants as numerous as the stars, but then waited to give them their one child until they were both past childbearing age—Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90.

When Satan led Adam and Eve into sin, God promised to send someone who would crush the serpent's head, and then He waited thousands of years to send His Son.

And yet, we read, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son" (Galatians 4:4). That is, when the time was "fully come," God did what He had promised.

Why does God make us wait? Is He slow? Does He just want to teach us patience? Is He unaware of the struggles we go through as we wait?

Who would presume to answer for God?

Again and again in the Bible we have God encouraging us to ask, to bring our needs to Him, and to ask in faith. (See, for example, 2 Chronicles 7:14; Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 7:7, 8; John 14:13, 14; and 1 John 5:14, 15.)

Looking at these promises and the examples of how God works in response to our needs and requests, we can conclude a number of things.

1. *God hears the cry of His people.* We must never doubt the attentive ear of

God, nor the kindness and compassion in His heart as He hears our requests.

2. *God knows the needs of His people.* When we pray to God in distress, we might see only the distress of the moment and miss how this moment fits into the whole story of our life or into the greater purposes of God. When we are sick, in other words, we simply want to be well. When someone is hurting us, we want him to stop. When we are going through a rough time, we want out of it. When we are faced with a problem, we want an answer. Now, of course.

God sees the greater picture. He looks at the development of our character. He wants to see us grow spiritually. He is concerned not only about us, but about the ones who may be making life difficult for us. He looks not only at our present comfort, but at our eternal good.

So when we pray shortsightedly or one-sidedly—that is, when we pray looking only at our present good or only at our own interests—God keeps His eyes on the bigger picture. And He shapes His answer accordingly.

3. *God begins to work immediately in response to the prayers of His people although we may not see His working for some time.* When we do not see God working, we may wrongly assume that He didn't hear, or worse, that He doesn't care, and thus, that He is doing nothing. These assumptions must hurt the kind heart of God, for He really is moved by the prayers of His children. How many people in the Bible learned "at the end of the story" that God was at work all along, though they could not see it! Consider Job, Joseph, and David. And some, such as the Israelites who first prayed for deliverance from Egypt,

never did see the answer of God in their lifetime.

4. *When God makes us wait, we may be assured that His purposes are greater and better than we can see presently.* Assumptions based on faith are so much better than assumptions based on doubt! God really is at work. He really has heard our prayer. And He does have our best interest at heart. Waiting means He likely will do more than we asked. According to the Scripture, those who wait in faith are never disappointed.

5. *God works in our hearts while we wait.* If we look at Bible stories where people needed to wait, over and over we see God using the waiting time to do good things in the lives of His people. God prepared men like Joseph, Moses, David, and Paul to be leaders by giving them a period of waiting—filled with

testing. God used Abraham and Sarah's long wait to increase their faith and to demonstrate to all future generations that "what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:21). God used the centuries ahead of Jesus' birth not only to give many "previews" of His coming, but also to prepare the whole world to receive Him.

As we celebrate the coming of Jesus, then, let it be a reminder this year that God is always on time. God always knows what He is doing. God has not forgotten, and never will forget, the needs of His people.

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psalm 27:14). ■

—Reprinted with permission from the *Deeper Life Ministries* newsletter, December 2005

The Great Christmas Giveaway

by David L. Burkholder

Christmas is synonymous with gift-giving. We give gifts to one another in recognition of God's great gift to us—the gift of a Saviour. Christians celebrate this gift with a season of joy and remembrance. However, the season as we once knew it has been taken hostage by secular interests. Above all, it has been commercialized to the point of absurdity. Retailers with a solitary focus on the bottom line pull out all stops to make it a time of high traffic and high profit. Homeowners and businesses have turned this ostensible, holy celebration into a secular festival of lights and ornamentation. They have cheapened the event with gaudy displays and figures not at all related to the true meaning of the season.

Perhaps the greatest danger, however, comes from the secularists with their overt attempts to delete any and all religious significance from Christmas. They have successfully removed all religious symbols from common public areas. Anything even smacking of religious symbolism is forbidden. Ironically, the manger scene, so descriptive of the event being celebrated, is banned due to its religious connotations.

And now even the greeting "Merry Christmas" is under severe attack by the secular purists. It is being replaced by the supposedly less offensive "Happy Holidays" or some such innocuous greeting. Part of the secularist's argument is that Jesus was not actually born on December 25, and

that that date was really a Druid day of celebration and thus carried significance as a secular holiday before the date was fixed as the birthdate of Jesus. It is all an attempt to take Christ out of Christ-mas and turn it into a secular holiday. Instead of Jesus being the reason for the season, it has been turned into a season of commercialization and hedonistic pleasure. God is left out. Self interests are at the forefront.

Now it doesn't take much imagination to see who is behind all of this. It's the one who stands to suffer the most as a result of the Christmas event. Those who understand the true meaning of the season know it happened and rejoice in celebrating the event, regardless whether it's off a month or more on the date. But it does hurt to see the great Christmas giveaway by those who wish to obliterate the religious aspect of the season. They are attempting to despiritualize one of the most significant events to happen on this sinful earth. That event held hope for all mankind. And now some are intent on giving it all away, giving it over to secularism and materialism. It's sad.

But the attempts of the secularists in no way diminish the truth and impact of that event, when God the Son took on human form and became Emmanuel, God with us. That event, planned in eternity past, was fulfilled in God's perfect timing when world situations were ripe for Jesus' coming. The exact day or month are not really all that important. But it is helpful in our human understanding to have a specific date on which to celebrate that great, imponderable event we call Christmas, the birth of our Saviour.

God's gift to man was the true great Christmas giveaway. God the Father freely gave His only Son in a gift of such magnitude that stretches man's comprehension. That the very Son of God would leave heaven and humble

Himself to be born as a human baby staggers the imagination. And not only was the gift itself of such staggering import, but the purpose of the gift far outstrips our comprehension. This gift, this Son of God, was given to mankind for the express purpose of dying for man's sin.

Certainly we who have accepted that gift and its resulting salvation are grateful, but that the whole transaction staggers our comprehension cannot be gainsaid. There is only one word to describe the motivation for that gift, and that word is love. Agape love, self-giving love. Love that puts the good of others above one's own. God demonstrated such love in the Christmas event.

It also staggers the imagination to realize that many to whom this priceless gift is freely offered refuse to accept it. Bound up in that gift is true life—freedom from the present guilt of sin, and the promise of future eternal glory. Yet many turn it down, choosing rather to embrace the temporal tinsel of the world in exchange for the lasting glory of eternity. They have been duped and blinded by the glitter of a misplaced emphasis, one that focuses on temporal and short-term satisfaction. And the loss is theirs. Eternally.

The Gift, the great Gift, was given by God for the benefit of all men. But it must be accepted to become effective in one's life. And in that acceptance there must be a giving up of oneself. It is, in a sense, a gift with strings attached. And perhaps that is the crux of the problem. It seems very difficult for some people to look beyond the pleasures of the moment for the promise of future satisfaction, even though the exchange is way out of proportion in terms of the resulting benefits. It is extremely sad that in this season of joy and gift exchange that so many are ignoring the greatest gift ever offered to anyone, thus missing the greatest joy and peace

of heart possible to man. Many have bought into, or fallen unwittingly into, the commercialization and secularization of the Christmas event to the detriment of their eternal well-being. One wishes it would be otherwise.

There was love and purpose behind God's gift at Christmastime those many years ago. It was a great giveaway, the giving of heaven's best to provide salvation and hope for a sinful world. But the celebration has been hijacked by those with lesser motives. This holy season has been given away to the merchants and secularists through the subtle influence of the

destroyer of all that is holy and good, of all that represents God.

But as those who understand the season and have embraced God's Gift, let's be alert to these subtle influences as we approach this Christmas season and not get caught up in the secular giveaway, but rather rejoice over the greatest gift ever offered to hopeless mankind. Let's be sure to observe it as a holy day, a day dedicated to remembrance and of thanksgiving to God for His indescribable gift. And let's be free, as were the shepherds of old, in sharing the news of this great Gift with others.

And have a joyous Christmas. ■

Freedom From the Frenzy

by Simon Schrock

It's that time of year again! Finish up the leftovers from Thanksgiving and enter the frenzy of getting ready for Christmas. We say it's the birthday of Jesus, but too often it's the frenzy of Christmas! Actually, it's pretty much what we make of it.

I often walk alongside of others in their frenzy—like being in a store and hearing, "Here Comes Santa Claus" over the sound system, followed by "Away in a Manger." Then there's my neighbor who went "all out" last year. His entire house and porch were outlined with a string of lights. Even the porch posts were lit up. The shrubs in front of the porch and the trees along the street were covered with bright lights. A big, red candy cane about 15 feet tall really stood out. What really got my attention was two clusters of lights that were somehow supported about 30 feet above the roof with approximately a hundred lights in each

cluster. In amazement at the time and work it must have taken, I wondered how it was ever raised up so high above the house. It must have taken several Saturday's chores to do all that ladder-climbing and roof-crawling.

Christmas. It's about the birth of Christ—at least that's what we say. But what does all the frenzy have to do with His birth?

I'm glad we don't have church rules telling us to go to all that trouble! Oh, I'd gladly do it if there were some New Testament passage instructing us so. I'd gladly join in the frenzy if Jesus had taught His disciples in the Upper Room to do all this in memory of the day of His birth. I know of not one single Scripture that supports that idea.

This is the time of year the culture surrounding us gets into the Christmas frenzy. Starting in the summer, merchants have been stocking up for a good season of retail profits. Ninety-degree

temperatures outside do not prevent the Christmas card displays from taking shape inside. Promotional letters announce the news that it's time to "rake in the cash." On Friday morning after Thanksgiving shopping centers are crowded with people looking for the advertised specials. Credit card accounts will go up with the burden to pay coming in the mail about ten days after the holiday is past. At Choice Books, we think we see an increase in sales of the book, *How to Win Over Depression*, soon after the holiday season.

Many activities are required to get ready: parties to plan, programs to attend, and along with that, plenty of concerts, dramas, live nativity scenes to fit into our already crowded schedules. Ho-hum, is this really about the birth of Christ?

Am I totally anti-Christmas? Not quite! When I was a child, my oldest brother made a comment that maybe Christmas should be like Thanksgiving, where we go to church in the forenoon, then come home and have dinner together. I did not like that idea, because I didn't want to give up the little gifts we received, even though it may have been merely a candy bar, a pair of gloves, and an orange.

I'm for having the family come together for a special time of remembrance. I put the cards we receive on a string in a most used area of the house. It's fine with me to grace the table with some of our finest foods. I'm for a family tradition that makes good memories for years to come. Yes, I want to go to the school program my grandchildren are involved with, the church's night of caroling in the community, and the special dinner at work. Even that sounds busy. May I call it, "Christmas in moderation"?

I am concerned when we who claim to be disciples of Christ gradually slip into the frenzy of the world to cele-

brate Christmas. I get a pain in my spirit when I see homes where parents practiced a modest Christmas and have passed on to be with the Lord, that the next generation seems to adopt the ways of the surrounding culture. They light up the house with lights, tinsel, and trees like the secular world does. They have traded the simple life of their parents for the trappings of secular culture.

Years ago, I wrote an article entitled, "Let the Heathen Destroy the Trees," (*Calvary Messenger*, Dec. 1976). I still see it that way. I find no hint in the Bible that calls for followers of Christ to cut down trees, bring them into our houses, and light them up in remembrance of Christ's birth.

Jeremiah warned, "Learn not the way of the heathen." Then he describes what some of those ways are: "For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman with the ax. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not." (See Jeremiah 10:2-4.) I can almost hear the argument coming: *He was not referring to the Christmas tree.* That may be right. However, the same principles apply. The Christmas tree has no biblical foundation. Such vanity comes from the customs of popular culture. Even so, believers attempt to Christianize the tree with decorations that are to represent Christ.

Here is a point of deception: Our culture does not consider itself to be heathen. Many Americans still consider America to be a Christian nation and culture. Are we saying that since America is not heathen, Jeremiah's warning does not apply? To call some of these vain practices into question receives response similar to the religious leaders of Jesus' day when He declared that He had come from the Father.

Let us recognize that “Christian American” culture is not the same as Christ’s call to discipleship. That is a call to deny daily what self desires and to identify with Him. It’s a call to present our bodies a living sacrifice to Him. I believe it’s a call to suffer for His cause. It’s a call far beyond that coming from the lukewarm Christian American culture. It is best understood as a call to, “come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:17, 18).

As I said, I am for Christmas in moderation and special family traditions that make good memories. I’m also for experiencing the freedom from the bondage of a secular culture. Freedom from the traditions of this present world. Freedom from having to spend days decorating with lights, tinsel, and trees—then days un-decorating.

Christians rejoice in having been set free from the ceremonial law of the Old Testament era. We are glad we no longer need to practice its rites and ceremonies. The New Testament teaches us to, “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

While we have been set free from the ceremonial law, we tend to drift into entanglement and bondage of the world’s customs. I’m thankful to live in the time of God’s grace and freedom from the ceremonial law. Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Jesus is the truth. I’m for experiencing a relationship with Christ that also gives me true freedom from the bondage of vain customs of the world and the frenzy of Christmas that does not honor the Lord Jesus. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Calvary Messenger*, December 2005

The Beauty of the Nativity

by Rachel Mast

Many times we portray the Nativity in one picturesque, peaceful moment. We picture Joseph, a dark, middle-aged man with a staff, on one side of the manger in worship. We depict Mary as a blond-haired, blue-eyed young lady in her twenties, kneeling in awe on the opposite side of the manger. We imagine ruggedly handsome young shepherds on bended knees in front of the manger, and majestic, kingly wise men joining them with their gifts of gold,

frankincense, and myrrh. We envision white, wooly lambs; quiet, docile cows; and mild, gentle donkeys reclined around the manger, gazing into it. We think of the stable as a snug little wooden building with bounteous hay, and even the manger itself as a sort of cradle overflowing with clean, soft straw, in which lay a wonderful, glorious young king. We have glorified Christmas until it appears to be a cozy, pretty winter night.

In all probability the real Christmas was not a bit like that. Instead, there was Mary, a young Jewish girl, dark and olive-skinned, who lay in the hay exhausted. She had just given birth for the first time, and nothing had gone the way she had planned. Instead of Mary resting up, taking it easy, and conserving energy in the last days of her pregnancy, she was either jostling along on a donkey or trudging along on a dirt path. And why? To pay the taxes for which the struggling newlyweds hardly had money in the first place. Instead of giving birth in a welcoming home, she had a dingy, dark cave full of filthy animals, reeking with manure. Instead of a bustling, experienced midwife who would assure her that everything was fine, Mary had nothing but an embarrassed, awkward young man who didn't know anything about the process. Instead of a beautiful new cradle, there was a rickety old feeding trough with some musty, prickly hay. Instead of a loving extended family to greet the babe, there were but a handful of dirty old shepherds—although they seemed to think the world of the infant. (The wise men would have helped the scene a little with their lavish gifts, but they wouldn't have come until later.) Mary herself may have been only a young teenager. She was probably somewhat terrified, heartbroken, and filled with despair. She may have dreamed of having a child since she was young, but not in conditions such as these!

Why? If, as God had said through the angel, this Babe *was* the Saviour of the world, the promised Messiah, why did

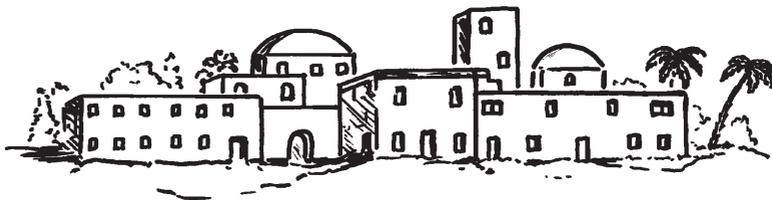
God allow this? Did He think He would eventually rise out of this and become sort of a Bill Gates and Napoleon Bonaparte of his time, with riches and power combined? No, He knew He was only to be a lowly carpenter from Nazareth. Was He to gain billions of dollars by lowering Himself and becoming a man? He didn't need money; He already owned the whole world! Then was He tired of being a ruler? Did He think the human life would be easier, more fun, or less complicated? This is not yet the answer! Jesus knew He was to be persecuted by man and finally fastened to a cross to die a cruel and painful death. So why did this happen?

He was made in the likeness of man. This infant, although He was King of kings and Lord of lords, was a *man*. He was lowly, humble, and poor; He took upon Himself the form, not of a king, but of a *servant*. But why did He do this? Why did the King of kings and Lord of lords allow Himself to fall to such a state of lowliness and poverty?

Why? Out of love . . . for me and for you. Because of our sin, we deserved the punishment of death. Yet the Creator of the world was willing to lower Himself, so that we could have a restored relationship with Him. So, even though the Nativity itself was not a beautiful scene, there *was* beauty—the beauty of Christ's unselfish sacrifice. This is the real essence, the *real* beauty of the Nativity. ■

Rachel Mast is a 14-year-old girl from Faith Mennonite Fellowship.

—Reprinted with permission from *The Alliance Newsletter*, November 2005



Living

Below the Standard

by Mark D. Avery

"I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 31:14).

To say that Jeremiah faced opposition is to understate his situation. He prophesied, restating the message God had given to him. Yet those who heard him did not like what he said. Captivity was coming, yet Jeremiah also saw beyond the captivity to the restoration. Looking ahead, the prophet saw a time when the priests would not only go about the routine of service in the house of God, but they would be filled with "fatness." Their people would also be satisfied with the goodness of God.

Most pastors have experienced times in their ministry when the income they received from their congregation was insufficient for the needs of their family. Such seems to have been the case in Jeremiah's day. Priests were having to supplement their income through other means. God's promise was that a day was coming when the priesthood would receive abundant offerings and sacrifices for their needs.

Yet a more important truth was included in the prophet's message to his people. Rather than merely promising financial affluence for the priests and the people, God was letting them know that a time would come when they would experience an overabundance of God's blessing.

Christians in America are blessed with an overabundance of wealth. Despite the increasing cost of fuel, in many ways we are better off than we have ever been. Sadly, however, our affluence has too often contributed to a

spiritual poverty among us.

The time has come for us to remember that God wants His people to be satisfied with Himself. Rather than surrounding ourselves with the things our society counts important, it is time for individuals and churches to seek the spiritual fatness which God has promised and provided for us. Then, and only then, will we be satisfied with God's goodness.

Too long the Church has been content with declining attendance and uninspired worship. Too often believers have settled for lifestyles of bondage to sin. All the while, God has made abundant fullness available to those who want it. But the key is, we must want Him more than anything or anyone.

Jesus consistently calls us to lives of total commitment. How easily we cordon off certain areas of our lives, and expect Him to honor our "off limits" signs. The time has come for us to re-examine our commitments. The Church is at war against our spiritual enemy. The only hope of winning, the only hope of making new converts, the only hope of maintaining a faithful spirit is for us individually to be totally His. Then we can expect to be satisfied with His goodness. Until then, we are merely living below the standard. ■

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Topsy-Turvy Ideas of Prayer and Worship

by Philip Sheppard, M.D.
Sydney, Australia

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Nowhere does man exhibit his folly more than when he prays, for unless he prays according to the Scriptures of the revealed mind of God, he soon discloses the "topsy-turvy" state of his mind. The popular idea of prayer is that we are, by our earnest pleading, to induce God to *alter* His purpose. Whereas with God—the God of the Bible—there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

The truth is that in connection with prayer, as in everything else, man needs instructing. If the disciples needed to say, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1), most certainly all of us need to. When we are thus taught, and learn to pray in the spirit, the effect is that we are changed—changed from arrogance to humility; from dictators to supplicants; changed so that with shamefacedness, we abandon our wicked presumption of attempting to regulate the Almighty.

God says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). The chief design of prayer is to bring us to our knees as supplicants before God. But man, with his usual perversity, turns things upside down. Instead of regarding prayer as a footstool, he turns it into a throne; instead of asking from God, he presumes to dictate to God; instead of owning God as a Sovereign Supreme, he deigns to look upon God as a Servant—his Servant to be ordered about at his pleasure.

The Design of Prayer

Prayer was designed of God to humble man into the dust to ask for those things

which are according to His will (1 John 5:14). But in his pride, man (who is incompetent to regulate his own ways) undertakes to prescribe the ways of the Almighty. Even believers are infected with this evil spirit, as is clearly witnessed to by their talking about "claiming" from God instead of humbly pleading His promises.

Again, the pride of the flesh is exhibited by many praying souls insisting that God should answer their prayers in their way, as though creatures of time knew better than Him who inhabiteth eternity, what was best for them! That God reserves to Himself the right to answer even the prayers of faith in His own time and way is clearly seen from the manner in which He responded to the petitions of the Apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians 12, we hear that after a thorn in the flesh had been given to him ("given," not sent) that the apostle "besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart" from him (v. 8). God did respond to the cry of His servant, but His response did not take the form which Paul had desired. Instead of removing the "thorn in the flesh," the Lord gave the apostle grace to endure it.

The great Exemplar of the prayer-life, as of everything else that is good, is the perfect Man, the God-Man, the Lord Jesus. Behold Him amid the awful agonies of Gethsemane! See Him on His face before God! Hear Him as He cries, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But that was not all that He said. Weigh carefully His concluding words: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). Here is the only becoming attitude for us to take in

the presence of the Most High—our every petition must be placed in subserviency to that of the Almighty.

To sum up: The present trend of much so-called prayer today is: “Not Thy will, but *mine* be done.” The proper attitude, as exemplified by the incarnate Son of God, was, “Not *my* will, but *Thine* be done.”

Wrong Ideas of Worship

If it be true that men get things topsyturvy in connection with prayer, we should also expect to find them doing the same in regard to divine worship. Such is indeed the case, and it is to an extent that few are aware. Were the Apostle Paul on earth today, we are satisfied that if he entered many churches in Christendom and beheld what was there going on, he would say, “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:23).

First, there is an amazing ignorance as to the act of worship itself. Worship is a personal thing and cannot be rendered by proxy. Yet how many there are who pay the priest or the preacher to pray for them, who contribute to the maintenance of a professional choir, and then suppose that their presence at church as mere listeners constitutes them worshippers. What a delusion!

Again, there is a deplorable ignorance displayed in the place which is given to worship. Man puts service first and worship last. The popular slogan in many of the so-called evangelical churches is that we are “saved to serve.” What an index to the low state of spirituality which almost everywhere prevails! God puts worship before service! Mark the order in Christ’s crushing rebuke to the tempter: “Thou shalt (1) worship the Lord thy God, and (2) him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10)!

God Seeks Worshipers

We are saved to worship. What the Father desires is the adoration of our hearts before the works of our hands. What is Christian service worth if it does not come from an overflow of a heart that praises God? It is

greatly to be feared that much of that which passes today for “service” will prove to be but “wood, hay, stubble” in the day of testing. This same order of worship before service is to be observed in the demands which Jehovah set before Pharaoh. The first time Moses and Aaron appeared before Egypt’s king they said, “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness” (Exodus 5:1); that is, that they may worship Me. But subsequently we are told that Moses was instructed to say to Pharaoh, “The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness” (Exodus 7:16).

The general ignorance which prevails is also to be seen in the popular and erroneous idea of the nature of worship. The great majority imagine that “worship” is going to church in order to receive a blessing. They go to hear a sermon that their souls may be fed or to sing that their hearts may be warmed or to pray that their petitions may be offered. But real worship consists of giving, not getting. Worship is what I render unto God, not what I receive from Him.

The first mention of “worship” in the Bible indicates the significance of the term. “Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship” (Genesis 22:5). Abraham was about to offer his well-beloved son upon the altar of God. “Worship,” then, is presenting something to God; it is offering to Him our best. The second mention of “worship” is equally instructive. In Genesis 24:26 and 48, we find the servant of Abraham bowing in worship before the Lord for having prospered him in his errand. Worship is the adoration of a heart that is filled with praise and thanksgiving. So of the first mention of “worship” in the New Testament, we read that the wise men from the East worshiped the Christ-child, “and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts” (Matthew 2:11).

True Unity in Worship

Again, man's ideas are all upside down in connection with the subject of worship. The popular conception is that sinners and saints may unite together in worship. Comparatively few see anything incongruous in terming the singing and praying of believers and unbelievers "the public worship of God." But the testimony of Scripture is clear as daylight: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD" (Proverbs 15:8). Christ said to the scribes and Pharisees, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth . . . but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me" (Matthew 15:7-9). Unless worship proceeds from a renewed heart, it is utterly "vain," yea, "an abomination" in the sight of the Thrice Holy One!

Finally, many are astray in regard to the requirement of worship. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers

shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, 24). Here is the divine rubric on worship. How positive it is: Only spiritual worship is acceptable to Him who is Spirit. We cannot worship with our eyes, by looking on at an imposing ritual; we cannot worship with our noses, by smelling incense, however sweet; we cannot worship with our ears, by listening to music, however beautifully "rendered"; for these are all flesh, and God is Spirit. Worship must proceed from the new nature; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"; and they that worship Him *must* worship Him in spirit and in truth. There is no other alternative. God cannot be worshiped by the bodily senses. May the Lord draw out the heart of every Christian reader unto Himself, that we may worship Him "in the beauty of holiness." ■

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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. Paul M. Emerson, Editor, Sept. 28, 2006

The New Testament Doctrine of Nonresistance

by Harold S. Martin

The historic peace position which was proclaimed by the Brethren from earliest times, centered on the New Testament teaching of nonresistance.

How shall Christians respond to calls for supporting the nation's participation in war? What shall be our attitude in the midst of conflicts of various kinds? Some say, "Wave the flag; put out a cry to rid the world of evil by whatever forceful means is necessary."

As biblically-oriented, Anabaptist-related Christians, we want to demonstrate before the world the way of nonresistance. The word *nonresistance* is coined from the words of Jesus when He said, "You should not resist an evil person, but whoever smites you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). To summarize the teaching on nonresistance, it is necessary that we have a good foundation upon which to build our convictions about peace and war. And so we will look at Bible principles, related problems, and common misunderstandings.

1. BIBLE PRINCIPLES

Every Bible teaching has some basic principles upon which it is established. There are at least five foundation principles upon which nonresistance is based. The first principle that underlies the doctrine of nonresistance is:

a) *The Supremacy of Agape Love*

The Greek language has several words for love. One speaks of mere sexual attraction; another refers to a strong bond of friendship, such as exists between members of a family. But the word used most often in the Bible is "agape"—the love

that is rooted into the heart by the Holy Spirit when a person becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus (Romans 5:5).

Real Christian love is described in 1 Corinthians 13. It is kind and does not envy; it is not puffed up and does not seek its own advantage; it is not easily provoked. This kind of love is the supreme principle which is to govern the Christian's life. We are to express love to all people. We are to love *the Lord*—with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). We are to love *the brethren*—with a pure heart fervently (1 Peter 1:22). We are to love our *neighbor*—for love works no ill to one's neighbor (Romans 13:10). We are to love our *enemies*—and are to bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use us (Matthew 5:44).

Since no one is to be excluded from the scope of our love, any act of violence (in peace or in war) is out of the question for God's people.

b) *The Duty of Promoting Peace*

The word *peace* is found in every book of the New Testament except the epistle of First John. The Greek word *eirene* means "to be in harmony with another." The instruction is most clearly given in Romans 12:18, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all." That is, we are to do everything possible to maintain harmony with others. Try and answer angry people with gentle words. Seek to settle differences, even at personal sacrifice, rather than to take matters to court. The other party may not yield, but we are to do everything possible from our side, to maintain harmony, and to live peaceably with all human beings.

This rules out bitterness and hatred and strife.

c) The Rejection of Retaliation

The word *retaliate* means “to pay back, to seek revenge, to return like for like.” The Bible admonition is given in Romans 12:17, when the Apostle Paul says, “Repay no one evil for evil.” Christians are not to repay evil with the same kind of evil someone has done to them. Instead, we are to “overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). It is the opposite of a tee shirt message I saw sometime ago: “I don’t get mad; I just get even.”

We are not to do to others as they do to us. Rather, we are to do to others as we would have them do to us. This is the Golden Rule. This is the principle by which Jesus lived. “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return” (1 Peter 2:23). Retaliation is wrong for God’s people because we are to turn the other cheek, to go the second mile, and to show mercy toward others.

d) The Existence of Two Kingdoms

There are two kingdoms of people in this world—those who have been regenerated by faith in Jesus Christ, and those who are unregenerate. Jesus said to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight . . . but my kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

A “kingdom” is a domain over which a king rules, and spiritually speaking, Jesus says there are two kingdoms. Jesus is Lord over the church; Satan is the god of this world. Each kingdom operates by different ethics and assumes different responsibilities. Jesus was saying that the nations of the world do fight. And in fact, as long as men and women are unregenerate, there will be wars between political states—but Jesus says, “Now is my kingdom not from here. My kingdom is a different kingdom; My kingdom operates by higher laws; those who are members of My kingdom do not fight.” And so the dis-

ciples of Jesus choose an alternative service (if that is available), doing something that benefits humanity—or, if an alternative is not available, they choose death. The Lord’s people refuse to take up arms and participate in warfare among nations.

The typical modern pacifist point of view says that we’ve got to establish a new world order; we must call on the nations to disarm; we need a new political order. The pacifist has confidence in the upward progress of the human family. Pacifists ignore the necessity for regeneration of the individual, and the need for a second birth. Dean Kelly (former staff member of the NCC), in his book *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*, describes the early Anabaptists by saying that “theirs was a stance, not so much of pacifism, as of nonresistance.” Nonresistance is passive; pacifism is proactive.

e) The Sacredness of Human Life

Human life is a deep mystery. Each cell that forms the various parts of the human body has within it secrets which the powers of man cannot unlock. Even noted scientists cannot tell us what “life” is.

When we look at the reddish form of a newborn tiny baby, and see its many faculties all operating perfectly (eyes, hands, little fingers, ears, etc.)—all we can do is gaze into that little face with amazement. God is the author of life. He formed the body out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into our nostrils the breath of life, “and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). And because God has given man life, He holds the prerogative to take it away. Death is a tremendous doorway—a doorway through which humans pass into one of two eternal destinies. Only God has a right to open that door, and therefore it can never be right for one human being to take the life of another.

The five principles which we have just named, join together to form the foundation for the Bible doctrine of nonresistance: They are the supremacy of love (Matthew 5:44); the promotion of peace

(Romans 12:18); the rejection of retaliation (Romans 12:17); the existence of two kingdoms (John 18:36); the sacredness of human life (Genesis 2:7).

2. RELATED PROBLEMS

Any honest student of the Bible must admit that there are some problem passages in the Scriptures that seem to contradict the basic teaching of nonresistance.

a) *War in the Old Testament*

We don't have to read very far into the Old Testament until we are confronted with war. It seems that Israel (after the exodus from Egypt) was almost constantly at war. And sometimes Israel's going to war was done at God's command. In Deuteronomy 20:10-20, instructions are given, telling how to engage in battle. In 1 Samuel 15:3, the nation was commanded to totally destroy the Amalekites. All this seems difficult to reconcile with the doctrine of nonresistance. The following facts are related to war in the Old Testament:

(1) Israel was a nation of this world, whereas the church is a kingdom not of this world. Israel had a central government, a capital city, geographical boundaries, and a king with a royal family. The church is a kingdom called out of this world. It has no geographical boundaries, no capital city, and no regal throne. The church does not operate by the principles that regulate earthly kingdoms—whereas Israel was an earthly kingdom.

(2) Israel operated under the dispensation of the law, while the church is functioning during the dispensation of grace. The ethical standards (and the religious system) of the Old Testament must not be seen as the final and the highest desire of God for His people. Many of the Old Testament regulations have been superseded by God's fuller revelation of His will as given in the New Testament. Jesus says, "You have heard that it has been said, but I say unto you"—and then He gives further revelation.

(3) Israel was comprised of individuals who had not experienced the regenerating power of God. God's laws were beyond their ability to obey because God's Spirit did not dwell in the Old Testament believers as *an abiding Person*. Christians under the new covenant have been regenerated—equipped for a new kind of life, and thus we are called upon to follow a much higher standard of conduct than the ethics of the Old Testament.

If persons insist on living by the moral and ethical standards of the Old Testament, and say that *war* and *polygamy* and *slavery* and *jewelry* are a part of God's will for today—then, in order to be consistent, they should also return to the redemptive basis described in the Old Testament—and should sacrifice two lambs every day on an altar of sacrifice; they should mourn for their sins on the Day of Atonement; and they should observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread for a full seven days each year. If they insist on living by the *moral* standards of the Old Testament, they should also be satisfied to live by the *redemptive* standards of the Old Testament. The message of John 3:16 should be discarded and the sacrificial system of the old covenant should be reinstated. Another problem area includes:

b) *Some Statements in the New Testament*

Certain things which Jesus said cause some people to believe that Christians may participate in the armed forces.

(1) There is a statement in Matthew 10:34. Jesus says, "*Do not think that I am come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.*" The context of this verse, however, clearly shows that the word *sword* is a figurative word which indicates the division and persecution and misunderstanding that will arise among families (and in communities) where there are those who follow Jesus. The parallel passage in Luke 12:51-53 clarifies the meaning. Jesus says that "father will be divided against son and

son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother.” So Jesus is speaking about division in families—division because of faith in Christ, not about participating in war.

(2) At another time Jesus used a whip when cleansing the temple (John 2:15, 16). The text says, “*When he had made a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables.*” But the word translated “drove” (2:15) does not imply the use of violence and force. The word *ech-balen* is used in Matthew 9:38 to describe *sending forth* laborers into the harvest. Also, a better translation of the words “drove them all out of the temple, *with the sheep and the oxen*” (as found in the KJV/NKJV)—is “drove them all from the temple area, *both the sheep and the oxen*” (as rendered in the NIV/NRSV).

Other passages of Scripture may also seem hard to reconcile with the doctrine of nonresistance, but in each case, when studied carefully, one finds that the discrepancy is only a seeming contradiction.

3. COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

When nonresistant Christians share their convictions about peace and war, opponents sometimes speak up with a number of arguments.

a) Objectors to War Are Cowards

They say that one who does not risk his life by going to war is not a brave and strong person. Keep in mind, in response to that kind of charge, that many of the assignments in alternative service (called CPS in World War II) have involved a great risk to life and health. Some conscientious objectors became guinea pigs for medical research teams. One of the unusual projects during World War II was an experiment in human starvation at the University of Minnesota. Conscientious objectors (COs) were not fed anything for days upon days. Another project was related to research designed to determine

the effects of taking aspirin tablets. The number of tablets was gradually increased each day until the blood became so thin that nosebleeds were common. Another project involved the study of the effects of frostbite on the human body. The conscientious objector had to put his legs in ice water for increasing lengths of time each day. One man who lived on into the twenty-first century continued to walk with a limp because in CPS he had to participate in those experiments.

Other objectors to war served in mental institutions with the criminally insane. They were never quite sure what the insane criminal was going to do next. Objectors to war are not cowards. They are not afraid to die—however, they are afraid to kill! They know such activity offends their Creator.

b) Conscientious Objectors Are Parasites

“Parasites” are persons who live at the expense of others. They derive a benefit from others, but give nothing in return. The opponent says to the objector to war, “You live in the United States of America, and benefit from its blessings, but you won’t help to protect the nation when it is in danger.”

But it can be argued that one who shares the gospel with others, and prays often for civic leaders, and encourages obedience to the laws of the land—is indirectly doing more to benefit his country, than one who serves in the armed forces. Jesus implies (in the Sermon on the Mount) that such a person is the salt of the earth, and salt preserves!

c) People Will Trample All Over You

The argument is this: If you practice the principle of nonresistance, others will frequently take advantage of you. And it is true that some might take advantage of the person who refuses to retaliate. In some cases, they might even take your life—but this is part of the cost of suffering for righteousness’ sake.

On the other hand, there are some beautiful things that sometimes happen to the peacemaker. Kenneth Morse, in the book, *Preaching in a Tavern*, item #43, tells about Elder John Herr's experience in Myerstown, Pennsylvania. A neighbor was caught in the act of stealing some meat from Elder Herr's smokehouse. When he was caught by Brother Herr, he was assured that if he ever really needed food, he should ask for it, and Brother Herr promised to help meet his need. The neighbor was so overcome with the act of kindness that he later became a member of Brother Herr's congregation.

Likewise, James Lehman, in his little book, *The Old Brethren*, pages 54, 55, tells about a beautiful experience that came to Elder George Wolfe many years ago in Illinois. Elder Wolfe explained to the civil authorities that the Brethren could not accept military service, but when he had told his story, the governor said that the state needed people like the Brethren to produce supplies for those engaged in service—and they were given an exemption notice.

If you were home some evening, and someone would pounce on your wife and family and threaten to kill them, what would you do? We are all aware that loose morals, and the lack of respect for human life are more and more invading our communities, and this kind of thing can and does happen. A deacon couple from the Southern Pennsylvania Pleasant Hill congregation (in December, 1994) were stabbed to death in their own backyard.

It is true that we do not know what we might do until we are faced with such a situation, as I have often heard it said—but it's my personal conviction that it is possible for us to be so saturated with the spirit of Christ, that we would not in any instance resort to violence even in self-defense. If I had a presence of mind, I would appeal to the perpetrator; I would pray openly and boldly in front of the criminal; I may even try to hold back the person, and prevent him from hurting the

family member. But by the grace of God, I will resolve not to take the life of the evil-doer!

The doctrine of nonresistance is not a belief to adopt *only* when we are interested in an exemption from the military draft. Nonresistance is a principle that should help determine our whole way of life. It means that we will not resort to using the law in order to get piles of money from someone who has abused us and misused us. It means that we will not participate in industrial strikes at the factory in order to force owners of business to comply with certain demands that we choose to make. It means that we will guard our words, lest we use slander and verbal abuse to lash out at another, and in this way slay others with the tongue. It means that we will practice forbearance and use soft answers when conflicts arise in the home. Nonresistance should be a way of life in times of war and in peace time.

If our testimony in wartime is going to be meaningful, we must be known as a peace-loving people. Nonresistance applies not only to international relationships, but also to interpersonal relationships. In light of New Testament teaching, God is not pleased with the soldier who has taken human life, but if your home is a battleground, the Lord disapproves just as strongly! Too often our churches and homes and families are burdened and broken by the presence of hostility and enmity and ill feelings. None of us can really control the foreign policy of the United States government, but we can let the Spirit of God transform our selfish personal attitudes into attitudes of genuine love and concern for our fellow human beings. May that be the goal in the life of each disciple of Christ. ■

The above message was given at an Insight Session at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Charleston, West Virginia, on July 4, 2004.

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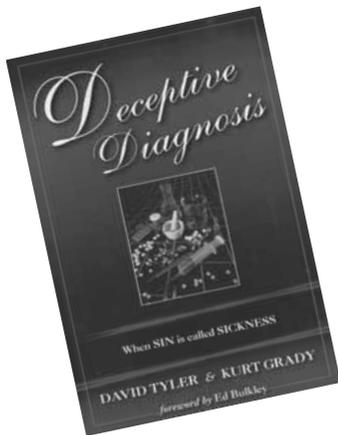
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