

The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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

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“Ice Age” dominated. Job lived soon after the Flood, and his book contains more references to ice and snow than the rest of the Bible put together. Up until perhaps the time of Abraham the world was a dangerous place. Continual catastrophes dominated their lives.

No doubt they needed reassurance that there would never be another Flood like

the Great Flood of Noah’s day, for it must have seemed they were still in it. Thus it was out of God’s grace and mercy that He instituted this beautiful reminder of His protection. And every time they saw a majestic rainbow it would remind them of the security they have in Him. And what a blessed thing it is to rest in that certain knowledge. ■

Benefit Concert Announced

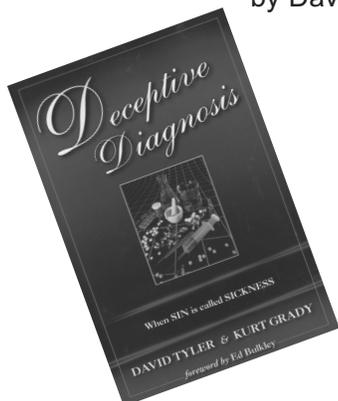
For the Cliff Brenneman Trust Fund for the Conservation of Church Music

As a man of passion, Cliff Brenneman worked energetically to promote quality choral church music both in his local community and across the Anabaptist world. In his memory, a trust fund was established in March 2005 to encourage the conservation of church music through a variety of ways including commissioned works, scholarships for conservative Anabaptist composers, songleading workshops, and choral festivals. In order to increase the resources of the trust fund, a benefit concert will be held in early April, 2007, Waterloo, Ontario, area. A choir led by Lloyd Kauffman will present a program of classic hymns. A commissioned piece by an Anabaptist composer will be premiered. Stay tuned for more details in future issues of the *Sword and Trumpet*.

Deceptive Diagnosis

When Sin Is Called Sickness

by David Tyler & Kurt Grady



From the Foreword by Ed Bulkley:

“I believe that if you will examine the arguments and evidence that Dave and Kurt provide in this book, your faith in God’s Word and His power to transform lives will be strengthened. Your confidence to help others with their problems of living will be enhanced as you realize that our Lord is more than able to heal confused minds and wounded hearts.”

**Great Buy!!
Only \$10.00 postpaid**

Person of the Month:

Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847)



Thomas Chalmers was born in Anstruther Easter, Fife, Scotland, in the year 1780. His years in elementary school were not characterized by great academic feats but things changed for him when at the age of 12 he was sent to St. Andrews University. At the beginning he was more interested in the pursuit of sports but his interest in academics was awakened with the help of Dr. James Brown, an assistant professor of mathematics. Thomas found himself having much interest in learning in several areas but especially in math.

During his seven years at university he fulfilled his boyhood dream of becoming a preacher by enrolling in the Divinity school. In 1799 he was licensed to preach; however, with his interest in mathematics he then went on to Edinburgh, where he studied chemistry and math, and in 1801, at the age of 21, he accepted the position of assistant Math professor at St. Andrews. He taught the school from 1801-02.

Then in May of 1803, he also accepted the position of pastor at a church in Kilmany, Fife. Sermon preparation was easy for Chalmers so when he was finished with his Sunday duties he enjoyed having the rest of the week to himself.

Things changed for him in 1809. That year both his older brother and his sister died within a short time of one another. They both had a deep faith and trust in Christ. At the time, Thomas was also very ill and he began to contemplate his own eternal destiny. In his student days he had read and studied the writings of Jonathan Edwards and had a good grasp intellectually of what Edwards was saying but had not appropriated the Gospel for himself.

While reading the works of Pascal and Wilberforce he finally accepted Christ as Saviour. There was a real change in his life. He knew that the things he loved must be given over to God and he was ready to give complete obedience to the Lord. His New Birth experience transformed his preaching. He invited his congregation to come to faith in Christ. God's Spirit began to work in hearts and many folks in the area were open to the work of God in their lives. Chalmers began visitation and became an avid student of God's Word. During these years of his ministry he had great interest in missions and missionaries.

Being a minister in the state Church of Scotland, he was sent to pastor Tron Church in Glasgow in 1815 at the age of 35. The large city of Glasgow was a far cry from the previous quiet rural church setting. It presented new and different challenges for his congregation. Brother Chalmers resurrected the office of Deacon to help meet the physical needs of the congregation and others in need. He got his elders involved in the work of the parish by visiting homes in the city, accomplishing the feat of stopping at every house in a two-year period. He started Sunday school on Sunday evening in every part of the city and Christian day schools throughout the week.

(continued on page 4)

Our Most Critical Need

by A. W. Tozer

The most critical need of the Church at this moment is men—the right kind of men, bold men. We languish for men who feel themselves expendable in the warfare of the soul because they have already died to the allurements of this world. Such men will be free from the compulsions that control weaker men. They will not be forced to do things by the squeeze of circumstances. Their only compulsion will come from within—or from above.

This kind of freedom is necessary if we are to have prophets in our pulpits again instead of mascots. These free men will serve God and mankind from motives too high to be understood by the rank and file of religious retainers who today shuttle in and out of the sanctuary. They will make no decisions out of fear, take no course out of a desire to please, accept no service for financial considerations, perform no religious acts out of mere custom, nor allow themselves to be influenced by the love of publicity or the desire for reputation.

The true church has never sounded out public expectations before launching its crusades. Its leaders heard from God and went ahead wholly independent of popular support or the lack of it. They knew their Lord's will and did it, and their people followed them—sometimes to triumph, but more often to insults and public persecution—and their sufficient reward was the satisfaction of being right in a wrong world.

Another characteristic of the true

prophet has been love. The free man who has learned to hear God's voice and dared to obey it has felt the moral burden that broke the hearts of the Old Testament prophets, crushed the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, and wrung streams of tears from the eyes of the apostles.

The free man has nothing to protect, no ambition to pursue and no enemy to fear. For that reason he is completely careless of his standing among men. If they follow him—well and good. If not, he loses nothing that he holds dear. But whether he is accepted or rejected, he will go on loving his people with sincere devotion, and only death can silence his tender intercession for them.

Yes, if evangelical Christianity is to stay alive, it must have men again—the right kind of men. It must repudiate the weaklings who dare not speak out, and it must seek in prayer and much humility the coming again of men of the stuff of which prophets and martyrs are made. God will hear the cries of His people as He heard the cries of Israel in Egypt, and He will send deliverance by sending deliverers. It is His way.

And when the deliverers come—reformers, revivalists, prophets—they will be men of God and men of courage. Such men will be baptized with the Spirit indeed and through their labors He will baptize others and send the long-delayed revival. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the Fall 2006 issue of *Unchained!*

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Discerning the Times

by J. Mark Horst

In Matthew 16:1-3 we read, “*The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*”

Why did Jesus rebuke these men? Were they wrong in asking for a sign? The request for a sign was not necessarily wrong, but their motives were wrong. Their asking for a sign was a result of their unbelief. They were not seeking to confirm a struggling faith. Rather, they were trying to find a reason to accuse Jesus.

Jesus rebuked them for their “earthly” focus. As religious leaders they should have been the first to recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promises for a Deliverer. They could observe the sky and tell what the weather would be, but they did not have the spiritual discernment needed for their time.

Do we have the spiritual discernment needed for our time? Second Peter 2 warns us, “*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies . . . And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. **And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you . . .***”

Our Reformation forefathers made application of this text to the church of Rome. How should we apply it today? Evangelical church growth seminars and books are filled with terms like *branding*, *marketing*, *targeted audience* and the like. These are business terms.

Churches design programs for consumers instead of using God’s Word as a basis for their activities. The “feigned” words Peter spoke about are words that are molded or sculpted for a specific audience. They’re designed to make hearers comfortable, not convicted. Jesus’ warning to the church at Pergamos is one the contemporary church would do well to

consider and obey.

What about our understanding of where we are on God's prophetic time clock? Again, Peter warns, "*Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*" It's true, we don't know the day nor hour of Jesus' return, but He did give us clear signs to look for as we approach that day.

No matter what your eschatological position, the signs Jesus gave us in Matthew 24 are unmistakable! Recent statistics show eight major wars and as many as two dozen "lesser" conflicts currently in process. The continent of Africa has been particularly hard hit by ethnic and tribal violence.

Then there are famines. Again, Africa tops the list, but there are several in Asia as well. While many of these are due to the lack of rainfall, or too much rain, economic mismanagement and political corruption have made them more severe. The dictatorship of North Korea's Kim Jong II is instructive.

The major earthquake of December 2004 that launched the Asian tsunami was, and is being, followed by numerous other destructive quakes. Pakistan, Indonesia,

India, and others have been severely affected. According to the U.S. Geological Survey website, **in one day alone, July 17, 2006, there were 43 measurable earthquakes around the globe!**

Jesus also spoke of diseases and pestilence. Here too, we are seeing "treatment resistant" strains of common viruses along with new diseases for which the medical profession has no remedy. The rise in immorality has spread STDs like wildfire and many of these are resistant to conventional treatments.

False prophets abound, and many who are "unskillful in the Word" are being deceived. The love of pleasure has lulled many into spiritual stupor and they are led unsuspectingly into error. Worship, music, and the arts have become an industry for financial gain rather than a vehicle for service. The creature is being worshiped more than the Creator.

What should our response be? "*You therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen*" (2 Peter 3:17, 18). ■

—Reprinted with permission from the August 2006 newsletter of *Hope Horizons*

—Thomas Chalmers . . . cont'd.

He was also greatly concerned about the needs of the poor. He instituted a program whereby the poor were cared for by the Church rather than the government. The program had very good results. He wanted to start outreach churches throughout the city but the denomination conceded by building only one new church, St. John's, and then invited him to be its pastor. He accepted, thinking that this would be a way to operate without so much government influence. He continued the work that he had already begun in the city when he had pastored Tron Church.

He believed that a church should be involved in bringing the Gospel to its community as well as seeking to address the issues facing its people. During these years many people were won to Christ and lives were changed. He pastored in the city of Glasgow until 1823. That year he had the opportunity to serve in the position of Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews, which he accepted. In 1828 he lectured as Chair of Theology at Edinburgh for fifteen years until 1843.

(continued on page 12)

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

JANUARY 7, 2007

Christ Gives True Freedom

John 8:31-38, 48-59

January's and February's lessons are all taken from the Gospel of John. They focus primarily on Jesus' work as the Son of God on behalf of man, with special teaching for His followers. Today's lesson from Chapter 8 focuses on the spiritual freedom one finds as he yields himself to the eternal Son of God. Perhaps John 20:31 best summarizes the message of these lessons: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."

Today's lesson text follows a discourse Jesus had just had with the Pharisees regarding His true nature. They failed to understand His claims or accept Him as the Son of God. However, as we note from verse 30, there were many who did believe on Him. It was to those that Jesus spoke the words in verses 31 and 32, that continuance in His Word confirms their relationship to Him, and the application of the truths of His Word to their lives provides freedom from sin.

It would seem from the tenor of the discourse that follows (verse 33ff), that those here debating with Jesus would be a different set of people than those mentioned in verse 30. They completely misunderstood Jesus' teaching

on freedom and bondage. They argued, incorrectly, from a political viewpoint; Jesus, from the spiritual, as noted in verse 34. Jesus was speaking of spiritual bondage, which enslaves all men as the result of sin.

The further debate, verses 48-59, focuses on the identity of Jesus. Jesus plainly told them of His divinity, of His relationship to the heavenly Father. (Read the intervening verses, 39-47.) But they rejected His claims and accused Him in very uncomplimentary terms of being a demon-possessed Samaritan (v. 48). Jesus then, rightly, accused them of dishonoring Him and rejecting the way to eternal life.

Instead of asking what Jesus meant by the statements they didn't understand (i.e., v. 51), these defiant people continued to refute Him and His attempts to guide their understanding. They kept referring to their father Abraham, but failed to grasp Abraham's long-range view of their present situation. They definitely were not children of Abraham in the spiritual sense. They based their relationship totally on their physical heritage.

It was incomprehensible to these Jews that any mere man, as they perceived Jesus to be, could possibly be greater than their father Abraham. If only they could have caught the significance of Jesus' statements and claims. But their hearts were closed, their minds blinded to the truth which the prophets proclaimed, the prophets

which they professed to revere.

As final proof of their defiant attitude and rejection of Jesus and His claims, they took up stones to stone Him for that which in their eyes constituted blasphemy—making Himself equal with God. Much less than being free men they were indeed bound in the clutches of darkness and sin. True freedom eluded them, as it does all men who will not see. Freedom is still available in Christ to all who willingly accept Him, obey His teaching, and live by the truths of His Word.

For thought and discussion

1. Jesus said, “The truth shall set you free.” Define truth. How does it set one free? Explore.
2. Why did the Jews, especially the leaders, find it so hard to accept Jesus’ claims to Sonship with God the Father?
3. The Jews honored Abraham. We honor Menno. What are the dangers, and the obligations, of honoring such men?
4. What is the danger of rejecting truth we do not understand? What is a better response?
5. Contrary to popular thinking, true freedom is found only in surrender. Why is this principle so hard to grasp and to embrace?

JANUARY 14, 2007

Christ, the Righteous Judge

John 5:19-30

Jesus had just come away from a confrontation with the Jewish leaders over a healing He had performed on the sabbath. (Read the first part of Chapter 5 for context, and read to the end of the chapter as well.) He further stirred their ire by His claim to be the Son of God. Our lesson takes up with

His explanation of His work and power and the authority behind them.

Jesus’ statement (v. 19), made it clear that He was not acting independently but rather acting in concert with the Father. He was making here a clear claim to equality with the Father in heaven, a claim these Jewish religious leaders rejected out of hand as being blasphemous (see verse 18). It is unfortunate that they did not recognize and accept their Messiah when He revealed Himself to them. But they were willfully blind.

In plain words Jesus told them that His authority over the sabbath and to heal was because He was the Son of God and the works He did were simply an extension of His Father’s works. Here, early in His ministry, Jesus laid down His claims to divinity and thus set the stage for His ongoing conflict with the religious leaders, the conflict which ended with His death on the cross.

But for now, Jesus held out life for all who would honor Him as God’s Son. He also stated that the Father had committed all judgment into His hand. And, that whoever honored the Father should certainly also honor the Father’s Son. Then Jesus laid down the great dividing principle between spiritual life and spiritual death: those who believe on God through the Word of the Son receive everlasting life, but, by implication, those who do not accept the word of the Son are still in the realm of spiritual death. And that leaves one under the eternal condemnation of Father and Son. A hopeless condition.

Jesus then reiterated the principle of life through the Son. Just as the eternal Father embodies life in its full meaning, so has He given to the Son the authority to grant that life to man. The acceptance of that life equates to a spiritual resurrection, and those who make that transition now (see Colossians 1:12-14), can also look forward to

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a future bodily resurrection to eternal life with the Son (see 1 Corinthians 15:49-58).

The great contrast which Christ was attempting to impress upon His hearers was that there was also a dark side to the picture He painted. Those who refused to hear the voice of the Son of God, thus rejecting His offer of spiritual life, would find themselves on that final resurrection day on the wrong side of God's favor. Instead of eternal bliss, they will face eternal damnation—separation from God and the punishment that ensues from rejecting His gracious offer of life.

Jesus affirms in verse 30 that He is simply the Father's agent, carrying out His wishes, subject to His will. The underlying message is that to refuse Him, as His hearers that day did, is to also deny the Father whom they professed to follow. He attempted to stress the seriousness of that failure—to them and to us. To refuse Him as the giver of life is to be forced to face Him as judge. The choice should be clear.

For thought and discussion

1. What were the Jews looking for in Messiah that made it so difficult for them to accept Jesus' claims as that promised One?
2. Why is it so dangerous to refuse to examine revealed truth, even if it runs counter to one's closely held beliefs?
3. What evidences was Jesus giving that should have established His credentials as the Son of God?
4. We say that for those who accept Christ, eternal life begins now. Explain how that is true, and don't forget the future blessings. They are out of this world.
5. How can we more readily convince unbelievers of the privileges of life in Christ as well as the consequences of facing Him as our Judge? Discuss this with your class.

JANUARY 21, 2007

Christ, the Bread and Water of Life

John 6:28-40; 7:37-39

Between last Sunday's lesson from Chapter 5 and today's, Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 with five barley loaves and two small fish. Because of the impact on the crowd (they wanted to make Him their king, see 6:15), Jesus went up to a mountain alone, then that night walked across the sea till He caught up with the disciples who had left that evening by boat. When the people came across the sea the next day to seek Him, He began His teaching on the true bread from heaven, the theme of today's lesson. (Read the first part of the chapter for context.)

In response to the people's question, "What shall we do to work the works of God?" (v. 28), Jesus responded that the work of God is to believe on the One whom God has sent, referring to Himself. Their next question then, was "What sign can you give as proof of your claim to be that One?" He had just the day before miraculously satisfied their physical hunger, and yet they seemed uncomprehending of His true nature.

The unasked question then in verse 31 was whether Jesus was greater than Moses who had fed their forefathers in the desert. Jesus explained that God the Father, the same giver of manna in the desert, was now offering them the "true bread from heaven" which would completely satisfy the spiritual hunger of all who would accept it. Then Jesus plainly told them, "I am that bread." But they were still uncomprehending, or perhaps more realistically, unwilling to accept Him for who He claimed to be (see v. 41ff.) Jesus then told them that it was the Father who called men and that He, Jesus, would accept all who came to Him for the gift of life. He also

reaffirms both His relationship to the Father and His subordinate role in carrying out the Father's will. Their will was one.

The Father's will was that all who look to the Son and believe on Him will find everlasting life. It was also His will that they remain faithful through life and then be raised to glory in the final resurrection. (Read the remainder of the chapter for Jesus' further discourse with the unbelieving people.)

Bread and water are both essential life-sustaining elements. In the previous passage Jesus shows Himself to be the "bread of life." Here in the verses from Chapter 7 He declares Himself to be the "water of life." He not only satisfies the hungry soul, He also assuages the soul of the one who thirsts for spiritual satisfaction (see Matthew 5:6). Jesus was proclaiming Himself adequate to meet man's essential needs, to satisfy his soul needs (see Revelation 21:6; 22:17).

Jesus also indicated that once the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the believer, that person then becomes a source of spiritual blessing for others. The gift of the Spirit creates overflowing joy from the innermost being of one who has been satisfied with the bread and water of life. That joy then spills over to bless and encourage others. Jesus was speaking here of an experience yet future. The coming of the Holy Spirit would follow His glorification—His death, resurrection, and ascension (see John 4:14).

Jesus' claims here created controversy among those who heard Him. But those who accepted His claims found their hungry soul fed and their thirsting spirits satisfied. He is still the "bread and water of life" to all who come to Him in faith.

For thought and discussion

1. What were the purposes of Jesus' miracles?
2. Many people of Jesus' day had trouble

accepting His claims. People still do today. What are the reasons—ignorance, fear, stubbornness, or what?

3. Some people attempt to satisfy physical hunger with "junk food." What are some spiritual "junk foods" with which some attempt to satisfy spiritual hunger?
4. We know the will of God to be that all men come to a saving knowledge of the truth. What implications does John 7:38 in our text have in this regard?
5. Jesus, referring to Himself as the "bread and water of life" speaks to the initial salvation experience. However, to satisfy physical hunger we eat often. What does that suggest regarding continuing soul satisfaction?

JANUARY 28, 2007

Christ, the Light of the World

John 8:12-20; 12:35, 36, 44-46

In our previous lesson from Chapters 6 and 7, Jesus declares Himself to be the "Bread and Water of Life." Here in Chapters 8 and 12, He declares Himself the "Light of the World." Not only does He provide spiritual sustenance, He also illuminates the pathway of life with spiritual guidance. To follow Him is to not walk or stumble in darkness, but to see clearly the pathway before us.

Light has two closely related properties. It dispels darkness and it illuminates its surroundings. Spiritually speaking, Christ the Light of life dispels the darkness of sin and illuminates the pathway of life, showing the believers where to walk. Since Christ Himself is Light, when one follows Him he will have the path of life clearly illuminated.

When Jesus declared Himself the Light of the world, it set off a controversy with

the Pharisees. They took issue with Him because they understood His statement to mean that He was thus claiming to be Messiah. They challenged His claim, saying it was not true because He was making the claim without additional authenticating witness.

Their problem was not that there was not ample empirical evidence for His claim (witness His many miracles), but that their hearts were willfully blinded. They were still walking in darkness, refusing the Light which was freely offered to them. Had they been willing to compare Jesus' works with the Scriptures they claimed to uphold, they could have clearly identified Him and validated His claim (see John 5:36-39). Someone has well said that there is none so blind as he who will not see (Swift). That was the condition of the Pharisees, willful blindness. A most dangerous condition.

As we move to the passage from Chapter 12 we see Jesus nearing the end of His public ministry. He yet makes one last plea to His hearers. The Light, He says, will not long be with you, so while the opportunity still affords, accept it, walk in it, allow it to illuminate your life. He then makes the very obvious statement that those who walk in darkness do not know where they are going. But those who walk in the light have their pathway of life brilliantly illuminated.

Then in verses 44-46 (and on to the end of the chapter), Jesus makes one last appeal for their acceptance of Him as Messiah, the One sent from the Father, the very Son of God. He appeals to their rational thought that belief on Him equates with belief on the Father. And that those who have seen Him have, in essence, seen the Father who sent Him into the world as His witness.

Jesus, again in verse 46, states His mission. He came to bring the light of

life into the world and through that light to dispel the darkness of sin in individual lives. Failure to accept His offer, to reject Him and His words, will bring the judgment of eternal death (see verses 47-50).

Jesus is the Light of the world. He freely offers the light of life to all who wish freedom from the darkness of sin. The choice rests with each individual, and in each individual's choice lies his destiny.

For thought and discussion

1. Why would anyone choose to walk in darkness when light is available? Discuss.
2. In order for the Light of life to illuminate our lives, what must we do?
3. There may be times in our lives when the pathway is not so clearly illuminated and the light dim. What has likely happened? What is necessary to restore brightness and clarity to our path?
4. Why did the Pharisees and religious leaders so outrightly reject Jesus as the Light of life? What lessons can we learn from their refusal?
5. One wonders just how much longer the Light will be available in this present dark world. While we cannot generate light, there is something we can do with light. What is it? And what can we do to increase that potential. ■

Faraday Rested on Certainties

When that great Christian and scientist Sir Michael Faraday was dying, some journalists questioned him as to his speculations for a life after death.

"Speculations!" said he. "I know nothing about speculations. I'm resting on certainties. 'I know that my redeemer liveth,' and because He lives, I shall live also." —*Gospel Trumpet*

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

Britons in Danger of Microchip Tracking

The socialist government of Britain is the most prolific surveiller of its citizens with the average Briton being caught on surveillance cameras 300 times each day. There are 4.2 million surveillance cameras in Britain, an average of 52 per square mile. This density is obviously much higher in suburban and urban areas. A recent report from the office of Britain's Information Commissioner warns that, within a decade, every "movement, purchase, and communication" would be tracked by implanted RFID tags and a combination of other surveillance methods.

In America, the chipping has already begun: 70 mentally-ill have been implanted to track their movements. Readers of the *London Evening Standard* comment: "The Bible beat George Orwell [the writer of *1984*, a book that describes a Big Brother police state] to the punch by about 2,000 years. A lot of people have ridiculed the 'mark of the beast' that the Book of Revelation talks about, but it looks more and more like it could be reality in the form of an implanted microchip."—*Tim Callahan, Miami, FL.*

"You will never have to be microchipped if you have your own food. They won't come looking for you to do it. You will go to them, and it will be a requirement to obtain your bread and rice. Food is the weapon used to control the people in a socialist state. Perhaps the Amish know something about government that you

have forgotten." —*Don, Yelm, WA.*

—Source: *The London Evening Standard*

* * * * *

Quebec Requires Christian Schools to Teach State's Evolution, Sex-Ed Curriculum

The Quebec Ministry of Education is requiring that unlicensed private schools, including Christian schools, teach the provincial curriculum, including the state's Darwinism and sexual education curriculum. If the schools don't meet the requirements, they will be shut down.

Alan Buchanan, chairman of Eglise Evangelique, said, "We offer a curriculum based on a Christian world view rather than humanistic world view. We want the children to understand what [evolution] they're going to meet in the outside world, and also what's wrong with the theory. We also teach a better theory—that God created the universe and so on. You have the Christian worldview that says sex should only be in the marriage and a public school system that teaches kids about sexuality. We believe students should be taught abstinence."

Roderick Cornell, a principal of Emmanuel Christian School in Montreal, says that many of the unlicensed schools use ACE. The Canadian government issued a report in 1985 that banned ACE from public schools for a supposed "degree of insensitivity towards blacks, Jews, and natives." (I find this somewhat amusing because of the strong pro-Jew, pro-Israel stance that the ACE material

takes. It also portrays blacks as normal and equal students in the small cartoon strips that accompany the curriculum to teach Biblical values.)

The Montreal Gazette says, “The ACE program was rooted in a literal interpretation of the Bible and taught creationism over evolution.” The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada is fighting this edict from the Quebec Ministry of Education on the basis of a violation of religious freedom.

—Sources: *The Montreal Gazette* and *The Canadian National Post*

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Assyrian Christian Boy Beheaded by Muslim Insurgents

The Assyrian International News Agency reported that a 14-year-old boy, Ayad Tariq, was working at his job in Baqouba, Iraq, maintaining an electrical generator, when a group of Muslim insurgents walked in and asked him if he was “a Christian sinner.”

Ayad responded, “Yes, I am Christian, but I am not a sinner.”

The Muslims yelled at him, “Dirty Christian sinner!” They grabbed him by all four limbs and beheaded him while yelling “Allahu akbar! Allahu akbar!” (“Allah is great!”)

—Sources: *ASSIST News Service*, *Assyrian International News Agency*, and *Ankawa*

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Light Force by Brother Andrew

Joe Bacher, a reader of this column and pastor of Foothills Fellowship in Westminster, SC, generously gave me a copy of *Light Force* by Brother Andrew. The book’s tagline is “A Stirring Account of the Church Caught in the Middle East Crossfire” and it certainly lives up to its tagline. This is an excellent book that every American Christian should read as it gives an inside look into the Middle East situation and especially the very awkward position into which Arab and Jewish Christians are placed. This book is born of actual shoe-leather—Brother

Andrew’s many trips to encourage the church throughout Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and the rest of the Middle East.

The book brings out the amazing results of Christ-like love and reconciliation between Arab and Jewish believers who have been taught from childhood to hate each other. It gives the gripping accounts of Brother Andrew’s meetings with Yassar Arafat, the founders of Hamas, and the founder of Hezbollah. He relates the story (pp. 182-190) of preaching the gospel (by invitation) to 400 Hamas leaders in Gaza City. The book doesn’t lack for artillery-dodging adventure, but the most important insights are drawn from this rare look into the Jewish and Arab psyche and what works and what doesn’t in regards to reaching these children of Abraham for Christ.

Excerpt from the book: “The Church was the only hope for the Middle East, not because she had a better program or more political insight. She didn’t. What she had was a way to bring people from both sides together based on the work of one Man whose birth two thousand years ago would be celebrated in a few days. His light still shone through believers here in the Holy Land. Many didn’t understand the light. Many covered their eyes and refused to acknowledge the light. Others attacked the light and tried to put it out. But surely there are those who realized the bankruptcy of a peace process that had brought no peace for fifty years. For those who were willing, they could see the answer—Palestinians and Jews meeting at the foot of the cross” (p. 313).

—Source: <http://tinyurl.com/yelrrm>

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Humility Linked to Success

Name recognition is the goal of every politician this election season—marketing yourself and your achievements in a positive, assertive way is how you succeed in life, right? Not necessarily, according to a study by Baylor University in Texas. “If you are humbled by

something, some would think you would get depressed and question your self-worth. But our findings indicate that humility is a positive quality associated with self-esteem, well-being and even performance benefits,” said Dr. Wade Rowatt, head of the team that studied 200 college students. In another study, Rowatt examined whether humility is associated with higher academic performance. The preliminary findings indicated that college students who showed more humble traits got higher grades than those who were arrogant and narcissistic, reports *NewsWise*. Rowatt defines humility as a psychological quality characterized by being more modest, down-to-earth, and respectful, rather than arrogant, immodest, or egotistical. This conception of humility implies that one acknowledges mistakes, realizes limits, avoids bragging, and is respectful of others. —Source: *NewsMax Magazine*

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“Tower of Babel” Translator Within Reach

A prototype device built by the Carnegie Mellon Institute detects throat and facial movements as the user mouths the words in his native language. It detects the words being said and translates it to another language. A synthetic voice then speaks the words. The device is currently operational with an 80% accuracy rate and a vocabulary of 200 words. It is only a matter of time before that accuracy rate and vocabulary is dramatically increased. —Source: *BBC News*

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Nicaragua Poised to Outlaw All Abortions

A bill is currently pending in the Nicaraguan legislature that would outlaw all abortions, including even the “life of the mother” loophole. The bill is supported by both major parties, which control all but one seat of the legislature.

—Source: *Los Angeles Times*

== Thomas Chalmers . . . cont'd. ==

During the 1830s there was an ongoing struggle in the Church of Scotland between the government and the church. The church felt that congregations had the right to accept or reject possible pastoral nominees. Due to the laws of the land the government said “no.” As a result, in May of 1843, over 470 ministers, and over 400 elders and congregations, along with foreign missionaries, left to form the Free Church of Scotland. This decision was costly to the congregations in terms of their buildings and monetary support from the government, but they surrendered their property willingly and cast themselves upon the provision of God.

Brother Chalmers was now in his sixties. It was due to his influence that the Free Church had its beginning, so it was only natural that he should be called upon to be its first Moderator. At that point he resigned from his position at the university and devoted all of his time to help the new denomination become firmly established. He was appointed as Principal and Professor of Divinity at New College in Edinburgh—the pastoral training institute of the Free Church. He served there for four years until 1847.

During his short lifetime he also produced 34 written volumes, but for all his accomplishments he is most remembered for his concept of pastoral ministry—to serve the people around the local church and show the love of Christ to the lost.

Although seemingly in good health, Brother Chalmers died the evening of May 31, 1847, in Morningside. He was 67 years of age. —Gail L. Emerson

No Fear?

by Charles R. Swindoll

Pick up a newspaper and you'll read about immigration woes, more bloodshed in the Middle East, nations developing nukes, and millions starving. That's internationally. Closer to home it's identity theft, corporate crime, and bundles wasted on "body enhancement." Truly we need wisdom for such times!

And where do we find such wisdom? The writer of Proverbs tells us: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

So to get wisdom, we need to fear the Lord. Yet when we talk about "fear of the Lord," we risk two extremes. The first is to water down "fear" until it means only respect. At the other end is to envision an outraged God looking to wind up and zap us. Yet fearing God is not being frightened of Him. In fact, Moses made a distinction between the two when he told the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning" (Exodus 20:20).

In Pharaoh's day fear of the Lord kept the midwives from killing Hebrew babies, even though it meant endangering the women's own lives to do so. The virgin Mary said that through her God would show His mercy to generations of people "who fear him." Luke, in his Gospel, recorded that Jesus' miracles brought fear to the people. Later he wrote that the church "was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (Acts 9:31). So apparently the fear of the Lord can coexist with encouragement.

We tend to think of fear as a bad

thing. Yet fear of grizzlies prevents tourists from hand-feeding bears in Yellowstone Park. And fear of water keeps a three-year-old from jumping into a six-foot-deep pool. (Or hopefully it does!) Fear of a heart attack has motivated many of us to drag ourselves out of bed to head for the gym. In such cases fear can be a lifesaver.

In Annie Dillard's observation relating to the fear of God she wrote, "On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it?"

***"When we talk about
'fear of the Lord,'
we risk two extremes."***

Add to respect a good amount of awe and trembling in the face of God's mighty power and we're closer to what the biblical writers had in mind. Fear of God means we have enough of such awe and trembling that it changes what we do for the better. The One who makes volcanoes spew liquid flames and waves crash cares about what we do and think. So when He talks, we'd best listen.

Do you want to be wise? Start by asking yourself two questions: How well do you know the Holy One? How great is your fear of the Almighty? ■

—Reprinted with permission from the Fall 2006 issue of *Kindred Spirit*



Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

The primary purpose of this column is to give congregations fresh music to add to their worship, and/or insights into the origin and meaning of old hymns that have been around for centuries. It will (hopefully) focus primarily on original Mennonite hymns, although other hymns will be incorporated from time to time as well. We request your input for this column, particularly in the form of lyrics to be set to music and used for the column; but also if you know of a hymn that you would like to see published here with an explanation of its background. We specifically ask that if you know of composers who are qualified and willing to compose for this column, let us know about them. Please send your submissions to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803

Make Me a Captive, Lord



by Matheson/Byler

Lyrics:

George Matheson (1842-1906) was a poet as well as a respected theologian and preacher. His eyesight was bad from early in his life; and by the time he was eighteen, he was completely blind. The text of "Make Me a Captive, Lord" reflects his keen awareness of the concept God revealed to the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9 when He said, ". . . my strength is made perfect in weakness." Such paradoxical concepts provide the main subject matter of this hymn.

One of the more striking examples is the phrase: "It [my heart] cannot freely move till Thou hast wrought its chain." The "chain" of God's "matchless love" not only frees the heart from its bondage to sin, but actually gives one the capacity to *feel* a little bit more in the way that God does, which is much deeper and more profound than the way humans feel. There is a much greater ability to love other people and experience joy, but we are also much freer to allow ourselves to feel painful emotions instead of denying them, because our hearts are chained in God's "matchless love," which we

know will never desert us.

The opening of the third stanza is also especially striking: "My will is not my own till Thou hast made it Thine." The implication of the verse is that it *is* my will to "reach a monarch's throne," and that can only be done by following God's will, which requires us to resign our own crowns. I think the "monarch's throne" spoken of is actually the throne of "The Monarch," God Himself.

This compilation of so many seemingly contradictory statements is actually what gives this text so much of its power. It forces people out of their normal hymn-singing mode and gets them to analyze the text more than usual, in order to reconcile the ideas.

Music:

When John D. Martin approached me about composing a setting of this text for the hymnal he is working on, he requested something in a major key, with a much more pleasant feeling than the other more moody settings he had seen. Initially, I had some slight disagreement with his sentiments and would have

Make Me a Captive, Lord

George Matheson (1842-1906)

Douglas A. Byler, 2002

1. Make me a cap - tive Lord And then I shall be free ; Force
2. My heart is weak and poor Un - til it mas - ter find ; It
3. My will is not my own Till Thou hast made it Thine ; If

me to ren - der up my sword, And I shall con - queror be. I
has no spring of act - ion sure, It var - ies with the wind. It
it would reach a mon - arch's throne It must its crown re - sign. It

9
sink in life's al - arms When by my - self I stand; Im -
can - not free - ly move Till Thou hast wrought its chain; En -
on - ly stands un - bent A - mid the clash - ing strife, When

The musical score is written in 6/8 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are arranged in three stanzas, with the first two lines of each stanza corresponding to the three numbered verses. The music features a lilting, waltz-like rhythm with a mix of eighth and quarter notes.

preferred to come up with a bit darker setting; but as time went on, I came to see his logic. Although much of the text does have some negative connotations (e.g., the first half of the lines), the main thrust of the text is actually very positive. All of the stanzas conclude with a

very positive idea, as do most of the individual phrases. The lilting rhythm of the music lends itself to the idea that submission for the Christian can actually be joyful and rewarding, because it is through our “imprisonment” that God can show Himself strong. ■

Worship and Music

by Timothy J. Myers

I am appalled at some of the activities that occur in churches: rock concerts (sometimes disguised as “contemporary worship services”), fashion shows, and even religious dances. Including such examples of degenerate culture in the worship of a holy God is reminiscent of Aaron’s golden calf and the orgy that he instituted there at the foot of Mount Sinai.

My concern goes further: apparently some of the same “worship music” has its supporters among us. I refer to music that pulses with the same rhythm and beat that marks the popular music of our culture. The lyrics reflect little of Biblical Christianity. The “performers” and “artists” (phrases they use to describe themselves) usually take their cues from secular musicians in their appearance and posture. And yet they have breached the walls of some conservative Mennonite homes.

Excuses for such music by those who patronize it abound. “I like it.” “That is what will reach people who already like that style of music.” “Because I am an active person I like music that is energetic, not the slow, dull hymns we sing at church.”

The underlying attitude behind these statements is that we can approach God by whatever means we like. It presumes that worship is about man, and hinges upon what he feels and thinks.

A brief consideration of God will prove that perception untrue. The root of the English word *worship* is worthship, or worthiness. The original words in the Bible mean “to prostrate, to bow, to do obeisance to.” To worship is to acknowledge the utter superiority of the One worshiped and to approach Him on His terms.

Man has worshiped God since the creation, but little time elapsed until that worship was distorted. The first two people born, the sons of Adam and Eve, both

presented an offering to God, but apparently only Abel did it God’s way. God refused to accept Cain’s sacrifice. Worship that rejects God’s way will also be rejected.

To think that we can respond to God on our own terms is to expose our lack of truly knowing Him. Even though no man can understand God totally, the heart which has learned of Him, and yearns to know Him more completely, will stand in awe of His qualities, and will approach Him with the awe and reverence of a redeemed servant rather than with the boisterousness of a schoolboy chum.

God would have us worship from our hearts. When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, He clarified her misconception that worship involved a certain place. Rather, He explained, it comes from a sincere response to who God is—“*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24).

Worship has various mediums: prayer, singing, testimony, and even our silent thoughts can express our adoration of God. While worship is more than music, our music is a very real expression of it. Ephesians 5:18, 19 give us a snapshot of New Testament music: “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*” The Christian’s song is not raised with the abandoned comportment of the drunkard, but under the control of the Spirit of God. It is interesting to note that the singing seems to be directed toward fellow believers, but, as Jesus told the Samaritan woman, it is that melody of the heart that reaches out and touches God.

When Elijah met with the followers of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18), his opponents demonstrated that worshipping

Baal revolved around what man did. They leaped and shouted and cut themselves. They probably realized that their god was only a figment of their imagination, and their only hope was that Elijah could do no better than they.

Elijah, however, used none of their frenzied tactics. When he prayed to God he spoke calmly and clearly, stating before Israel his understanding of God, and his petition. And God answered with a miraculous fire.

A few days later God sent the wind, the earthquake, and the fire roaring past the cave where Elijah was hiding. But it was only after all these had passed that God communicated to man in a still, small voice.

There are many similar examples of communicating with God: Solomon at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8), the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6), and the prayers recorded in the Book of Acts (Chapters 1, 4, et al). While these are all different, and reflect different circumstances, there is in all a sincere, controlled spirit of reverence.

So then, how should we worship our God?

1. True worship is a heart awed before God. Such a heart will not direct the body and mind into a frenzy, but will cast itself down in overwhelmed rever-

ence before the God of the universe. That is literally what happened when Daniel and the Apostle John experienced the presence of God. It is a quiet experience, and one that should be a permanent part of one's character rather than a temporary, agitated emotion.

2. True worship can spring only from a heart that is submissive to God. In 1 Samuel 15, King Saul tried to excuse his disobedience, claiming to have saved the animals of the Amalekites for a sacrifice to God. Samuel sternly told him that "*to obey is better than sacrifice,*" and that God had rejected him. Let us destroy the offerings of the world, rather than dragging them before God as an offence.

3. True worship comes only from the heart. A distracted mind, a memorized prayer, words forced past an unforgiving spirit, a song sung thoughtlessly, have no more power with God than the water-driven prayer wheel of the Buddhists.

May our worship of our great God befit His majesty, His holiness, and His lordship. Let us keep out of our homes the music and passions which fail to reflect His character and station. They strip us of spiritual vitality and wisdom. Worship is about God, not about us. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the September/October 2006 issue of *Life Lines*.

Benefit Concert Announced

For the Cliff Brenneman Trust Fund for the Conservation of Church Music

As a man of passion, Cliff Brenneman worked energetically to promote quality choral church music both in his local community and across the Anabaptist world. In his memory, a trust fund was established in March 2005 to encourage the conservation of church music through a variety of ways including commissioned works, scholarships for conservative Anabaptist composers, songleading workshops, and choral festivals. In order to increase the resources of the trust fund, a benefit concert will be held in early April, 2007, Waterloo, Ontario, area. A choir led by Lloyd Kauffman will present a program of classic hymns. A commissioned piece by an Anabaptist composer will be premiered. Stay tuned for more details in future issues of the *Sword and Trumpet*.

When Borrowing Money

by Clair Hursh

Borrowing and lending is a normal part of today's economy. People borrow money when they desire to purchase something but lack the needed funds. These monies are then paid back over a period of time.

As Christian people, we emphasize living within our means; we should not spend more than we earn. In fact, the Bible teaches us to spend less than we earn so that we can give to help others in need (Ephesians 4:28). Is it then improper in any circumstance to borrow funds to make a purchase?

The answer to this question is that some purchases with borrowed money fit into the category of living within our means while other purchases do not. One example would be when a couple decides to borrow to purchase a house for their family. They have, over a period of time, saved up a percentage of the total cost of the property. Based on the rate of their savings, they calculate that they will be able to pay back the borrowed portion over a period of years. They would, in fact, be living within their means. When the final payment is made, this couple will own a property free and clear, and likely worth more than the original purchase price.

Another example would be when a couple decides to replace the carpet in the living room. They were not able to save money to make the purchase, so they buy the carpet on credit. If they were not able to save for the purchase, how will they be able to pay the debt? This couple was not living within their means.

Some families may determine to never borrow money in any circumstance. This can be honorable, but for other families it may be proper to borrow at times. Fol-

lowing are some pointers to consider before borrowing:

A loan is not a gift. A gift is ours to keep. Receiving a loan involves a promise to repay. There should be an understanding between the lender and the borrower about a repayment schedule and the interest rate. In extending a loan to us, the lender has shown that he trusts our integrity and commitment to repay.

Borrowers should never betray the trust of the lender. Payments need to be on time. This requires discipline and planning. If we find that we are unable to meet a payment deadline, we should contact the lender and discuss it with him. This should not be necessary very often, and it should be done only after pursuing other options, such as postponing other purchases to free up loan repayment funds.

It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay (Ecclesiastes 5:5). We need to be realistic in determining our repayment ability. If at all questionable, we should not enter into a loan.

Another part of being worthy of the trust of the lender is to always appropriate funds to the purpose for which they were borrowed. Suppose we asked for a loan to purchase a piece of property. To then use those funds to purchase a new pickup truck instead would be dishonest.

We should never borrow to purchase consumable items. This is done when using a credit card to purchase groceries, clothing, or gasoline for the car and then not paying the balance in full at the end of the month. These items are immediately consumed or at best hold very little resale value. We would then have a debt to repay with nothing to show for it. Many families have gotten into financial crisis with this habit.

Things such as a family automobile are higher-cost consumable items. They are a necessary purchase but depreciate (lose their value) rapidly. It is best if we plan ahead and save up funds to purchase our next vehicle. If borrowing to purchase a vehicle, be sure to pay off the loan faster than the auto depreciates. This rule should also be followed in purchasing equipment for use in the family business. The value of depreciating assets should always be significantly greater than the balance of the loan.

Borrowing to purchase real estate is usually the least risky type of loan. Real estate, if cared for, usually holds its value. Care must still be exercised to give proper forethought, so that one is reasonably sure that he can meet the payments. But if there should be unforeseen difficulty, making repayment impossible, the property can be sold and the loan repaid.

When considering a purchase that requires borrowing funds, it is wise to seek the counsel of others before making our decision. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). These persons can also provide valuable advice if things do not turn out as anticipated.

In a lender/borrower relationship there must be discipline to ensure that the loan is repaid. This discipline may come from the lender or the borrower, but preferably from both. Lending institutions usually send out notices of payments as they come due. Private lenders often are less exacting in demanding regular payments. The borrower must then discipline himself to repay.

Is a lender really doing his client a favor if he does not require timely repayment of the loan? One couple borrowed funds from a brother in the church to purchase a property. Interest was 5 percent per year. The lending brother said, "Send me principal payments whenever you have a 'chunk.' I don't want to deal with 'chicken feed.'" The borrower never had a "chunk" to send. Consequently, fifteen years later, the full amount was still

owed. Had the lender really done the borrower a favor with these lenient terms? For most people, the best way to pay off a loan is small amounts on a regular basis.

Borrowers need to recognize accountability to the lender. "The borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). Lending institutions usually ask for detailed information about one's financial status. Care should be taken to provide information as accurately as possible. They use this information to determine our ability to repay the loan. Normally they require an annual update of this information. Private lenders also have a right to this information, and we should freely share with them if they ask for it.

Whether our loan is institutional or private, we are using another's funds; care must be taken lest we fail with their money. If lenders become concerned about loan security, they have the right to ask that the loan be repaid. Or they may ask to have a role in the management of our finances. If this seems to be too much of an infringement on our rights or privacy, probably we should not borrow in the first place.

Another thing to consider is that financial obligations do bring stress. This may pressure Father to work long hours and neglect the family. Mother may find this stress to be emotionally unsettling. People have differing abilities to cope with stress. It is good to gradually find our way out of debt and not take too big a step when borrowing money. We can then find a balance in what we can handle financially and emotionally.

The weight of debt should discipline our lifestyle. There may be times that we must wait to replace the living room suite, repair the car one more time, or decide to postpone visiting family in a distant state.

"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." ■

—Reprinted with permission from the October 2006 issue of *Home Horizons*



Sermon of the Month



Each month we will feature a Biblical sermon in this column. We would like to emphasize expository preaching and ask our readers to submit good expository sermons for consideration. Please send typewritten copies by "snail mail" or email to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrumpet@verizon.net.

More Than Fig Leaves

by Steve Miller

Modesty has always been an important Christian principle. It is a Biblical teaching which applies to many areas of our lives. How do we determine standards of modesty? Is modesty whatever is deemed acceptable by the majority of people in a society or culture? Are there things that should be regarded as immodest by everyone? Do standards of modesty transcend culture? These are very basic questions, and we intend to find some answers in the Scripture.

Many Christians are comfortable with the principle of modesty and would agree that it is a vital aspect of the church's teaching. As long as it remains only an idea or a concept, many Christians have no problem with modesty. However, when the church makes an effort to apply principles of modesty, especially in relation to personal appearance and attire, there will very likely be differing opinions among many Christians. The attempt to establish a standard of modesty in dress can easily bring forth charges of legalism and the failure to allow the experience of true freedom in Christ.

To argue with those who have a different view on the matter is not a very fruitful approach. All Christians should be open and humble enough to first of all

desire to know what the Scripture has to say on this subject. There are a few things which need to be said as we begin. Scripture doesn't say a lot about modesty. In the Old Testament God gave some directions for the priests and other people, but if you go to the New Testament there isn't very much said about it at all. The concept of modesty is part of the account, but God does not give us a lot of specific details.

We can take two approaches to the issue. On the one hand, we could conclude that God is not very concerned about the specific application of the principle of modesty, or He would have given us more details on the subject. Or we could say that God gives us the principle and holds us responsible and accountable for the application. I don't think you will need to guess very long to see which is my view. I believe God gives us the principle of modesty and expects us to apply the Biblical teachings to our lives.

You are familiar with the parable of the talents. Let me give you a slightly different angle to the parable. The king leaves and goes into a far country. He gives one man four talents, another man two talents, and to the third he gives one talent. Scripture does not give them

specific instructions concerning how they are to invest the money. The king doesn't tell them to buy so many shares of stock in a particular company, or invest in a certain bank. They understand that he wants them to put his money to good use. The responsibility for the details is up to them. When he returns, the one man does what a lot of people do. To paraphrase, he essentially says, "I know you are a hard man. You reap where you did not sow. You are very demanding, and expect a lot. I protected what you gave me. Here is the one talent you gave me." The king loses his temper. He blows up and gets very angry. He says, "You know what kind of man I am, and you know what you should have done. I did not need to tell you what to do. You already knew it."

As I thought of this text, it hits hard in my own life. God says, "I gave you this talent. What did you do with it?" One day He will hold me accountable, even though He may not have given me a lot of specific details. He gave me the principles and said, "I want you to put them into practice in your life. I have given you abilities. I want you to use them for Me."

We recognize the difference between maturity and immaturity. Those of you who are parents understand it very well. When you leave home, you tell your children you want the house cleaned up when you get home. When you return, the living room is cleaned up but the kitchen sink is full of dishes. You ask, "Why are the dishes there? I thought I told you to clean up." Your children will respond, "We did clean up. The living room is all in order, and we wiped the table. You didn't say we had to wash the dishes."

Let us bring that over to our lives. The same is true in our relationship with Scripture. God treats us like adults. The difference between a child and an adult is that a child needs very specific directions. We will say, "I want you to go right now and clean up your room, before you go out to play." If you have a child that is

older and more responsible, you may just express a desire. You might say, "I'd like you to clean up your room." Or you could say, "I'd like to have you wash the car." You don't say you want it done in the next five minutes, or that they have to do it before they can enjoy their own activities. They understand that the expression of a desire is the same as an imperative command to do something.

If you are an employer you understand the principle very well. The employees you like the best are the ones to whom you can give some general instructions and say, "I want this task done today," and they will take care of all the details along the way. If anything unexpected arises, they will figure out what to do. They will do what you ask because they know that's what you want. They will see after many details that you never mentioned.

I believe that Scripture treats us the same way. For that reason, God gave us principles and we are responsible to apply the principles. If we don't, God holds us accountable for it, even though He didn't tell us exactly what to do. There is a good reason why He didn't tell us. God respects us and treats us like adults. We shouldn't beg God to treat us like little children. The situation within the Christian church today is not what it should be at all. We beg and beg God to treat us like little children. Unless something is clearly forbidden in Scripture, we conclude that it must be okay. God didn't really tell us not to do it.

That is not how God intended us to use Scripture. In the Word, God gave us His principles. We are expected to study them so that we can understand these guidelines and apply them in our life as a church. We need God's help. We need the direction of the Holy Spirit. But it cannot happen unless we have a desire to be faithful. That applies to the area of modesty. Just because God does not give us a lot of details about the subject does not mean it is irrelevant. We should not just

follow the pattern of those around us.

In 1 Timothy 2:9, 10, God gives us specific guidance: “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” Now, men, the text just says women, doesn’t it? If you believe that, then maybe your wife also has no responsibility to love you, because the Bible never says, “Wives, love your husbands.” However, we understand clearly that Scripture applies equally to everyone. While the passage here is addressed to women, it applies to men just as well. Some things in Scripture are implied.

I want to focus on the two primary reasons given in Scripture why modesty is important. Let me give you the second one first, because we often think of it first. We normally think the primary reason for modesty is the promotion and the expression of purity. We believe that is why modesty is important—to express our desire for purity and to attempt to promote purity in the minds of others. We need to be perfectly clear. This is a very important reason to practice modesty. Yet there is another reason which is even more basic.

The primary reason we should be concerned about modesty has to do with our relationship to God. I really believe that is why there is such a tremendous struggle in our day with immodesty in Christian circles. We fail, or simply neglect, to understand the true reason for modesty. Modesty is necessary in our relationship with God, and that is why God requires it.

If you look at Scripture, and I would like to have you turn with me to the second chapter of Genesis, it all began with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. God created them to establish a basis for modesty in our appearance, and also in the way that we think. I really believe modesty is rooted in how we think, and

then is reflected in our appearance. There is something I want you to notice as I read Genesis 2:20-25, the account of the creation of Adam and Eve: “Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

Here Scripture is recording the condition of man before sin came into the world. It’s important to understand that sin had not yet entered into the world, and Adam and Eve were created in perfection. Notice the record. Why does God choose to mention that Adam and Eve were naked and were not ashamed? Because it is important. God put it there for a specific reason to teach us an important point. Is verse 25 telling us the primary differences between the first couple and us today are that they had pure minds and knew no shame, and the fact that they didn’t have any clothes on was irrelevant because their minds were pure? Is that why God recorded this message for us?

Genesis 3:6, 7 tells us how sin came into the world: “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves

together, and made themselves aprons.” Did Adam and Eve suddenly realize that they were without clothes? Was it like the dreams you sometimes have when you find yourself in public without the right kind of attire, and you wake up and are so thankful it was only a dream? Some of you are smiling. I know you must have had such dreams.

Well, the answer is: No, that is not the purpose for this passage. The point is not that Adam and Eve were embarrassed to be without clothes. Today some people think if they have dealt with the shame issue, and are not embarrassed when they wear very little or no clothes, there is no modesty problem. Look at the next two verses in Chapter 3. God comes on the scene. Adam is hiding, so God asks him, “Where are you?” Then God has a pointed question in verse 11, even before He asks about the tree: “Who told you that you are naked?” Why does God ask him that? Adam has already taken steps to gather some fig leaves and try to make clothing to patch things up a little bit. He wants to cover himself so that he thinks he is at least presentable. Yet God says, “Who told you? How do you know that you are naked?”

You see, Adam and Eve in their original sinless condition were totally pure. God came down and openly communicated with them. They could stand in the glory of God’s presence and live. God was right with them. Follow very carefully what I believe about this text, and what numerous commentaries affirm.

Turn to Exodus 34. Notice what happens to people who are literally in the presence of God. This passage speaks of Moses when he would meet with God. “Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But when Moses were in before the Lord to speak with him, he took off the veil, until he came out. And

he came out, and spoke to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him” (Exodus 34:32-35).

Why did Moses wear a veil? Because his face was so bright from the glory of God that the Israelites couldn’t even stand to look at it. Moses put a veil over his face so that the people could bear to look at him. It is not difficult to connect this to Adam and Eve. When they were created, they were in the very presence of God and were clothed with bright, dazzling light. They were naked because they were not wearing the kind of clothing that we wear. The Scripture is emphasizing that they were clothed with light. The radiance of that light was very bright.

I like the way the *Pulpit Commentary* says it: “The unclothed bodies of our first parents were enswathed with ethereal and transfiguring light. In their case the outshining of their holy souls is yet the undimmed and unmarred image of their maker, capable of receiving and reflecting His glory.” And so there was this tremendous light. What happened when Adam and Eve sinned? The light vanished. All of a sudden the glory was gone and there was no longer a covering of light around them. Adam realized something was wrong. There was no more light; there was nothing. They had nothing on. They didn’t have their light anymore.

What man lost in the fall was tremendous. Think about it. Adam and Eve were so pure and so holy, with the radiance of God’s glory and His light. In their sin the light went out. Sin and light do not mix, because sin destroys purity. Ever since that time we have been paying for their sin. We will pay until the day when God takes us home. Adam immediately sensed the change, and I would say this: The loss was indescribable. Everything valuable and essential to man was

either lost or became extremely difficult. The relationship with God that had been a free-flowing relationship now is difficult. Purity that was just the natural expression of man now meets a lot of opposition, and is no longer so easy. In their response to this, Adam and Eve, in shame, quickly take some leaves and patch them together to cover themselves.

Return with me to Genesis, Chapter 3. In verse 7 it says: “They knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” I don’t need to tell you what they covered. You know well enough. Some people think that as long as what we call the private parts are covered, that is enough. That is adequate modesty. Well, notice how God responds. Adam and Eve had made an attempt to do what they thought was proper. I would certainly recognize that they were trying to do what they thought would be right in this situation, given the tragedy that had just taken place.

But notice what God says in verse 21: “For Adam also and for his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” First Adam and Eve made little aprons. They were probably like something you see in pictures of Indians with the loincloths they used to wear. God made coats of skin and covered them. He essentially said, “What you have attempted to do isn’t good enough.” Why wasn’t it good enough? After all, there was no one other than Adam, Eve, (who were husband and wife) and God. God sees everything anyway. Why did God think they had to be covered? Was it for future generations? Did God say, “There will be children coming along, so we need to get you dressed right”?

Well, that may have been part of it, but another reason was simply because of God. I believe very strongly that clothing is an acknowledgment before God that I do not have my covering of light, and I am waiting for the day when I will get it. Do you know what it means when people

are not dressed modestly, and go around partially naked—thinking it does not matter? What, in essence, does that say about what we believe? Even though people do not necessarily think so, they are telling God they really don’t care about the covering of light. That was six thousand years ago. It doesn’t have anything to do with me today. What I am doing feels good; it is acceptable in our day. I feel this is what I’ve got to do.

But it is directly against God’s truth. The Scripture says God created us in purity, with a covering of light. When we sinned we lost both the purity and the covering of light. Turn with me to Revelation 19:8. Notice what we are going to wear in heaven. It will not be cotton, nylon, or polyester. “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”

Do not take this in the wrong way. I do not believe we will be wearing literal clothes in heaven. Why? We will again be clothed with light, because we are going to be completely pure. There will be no sin, only the holy radiance of God. We will be in His presence and, therefore, we will radiate God’s light. The Scripture tells us that God is clothed in immeasurable light. He is holy. He is pure.

From all this teaching, I believe we can see that wearing clothing is an acknowledgment to God that I am by nature a sinner—saved yes, but I am not clothed in light. For now I will cover my body to honor You, God. I recognize that until You make me completely and wholly pure on that great day when You call me home, I will cover myself with clothing to honor You.

If we had time we could look throughout the Old Testament for more references. God was very explicit in the instructions He gave to the priests concerning their service to Him. He very specifically required them to cover themselves. You could not serve God in the temple without a concern about appearance.

With sin came shame. In certain respects shame is not a bad thing at all. We sometimes talk about shame, and think we shouldn't have any shame in our relationship with God. I would disagree and say that shame is essential in our relationship with God while we're here on this earth. Until I am made completely pure, I could not stand in the presence of God and live—I would die. Even though I am saved, I would die, because I have within me a sinful nature. That is why I could not stand in God's holy presence. So there has to be a certain sense of shame that recognizes who I am in the sight of a holy God.

When people try to cast off all shame, and do whatever they feel like doing without any shame at all, it is very tragic what happens along the way. Our first parents were covered with light because they were so pure and holy. It wasn't just that they hadn't noticed other people weren't wearing clothing. No, not at all. They were clothed with light because they were so pure, and when they sinned they lost their covering of light which God had given to them. Then they realized for the first time they had no covering at all. We need to be clothed, and that is why God prescribed clothing for man to wear.

Let us look at the second reason for modesty. Modesty is an expression of our desire for the promotion of purity. This is also very important. In 1 Timothy the Apostle Paul talks about how godly women should adorn themselves with modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. Then he lists a number of things that really should not be part of an expression of beauty, such as gold, pearls, or costly array, but rather the beauty should be the character of the individual. That is important for us to understand.

Modesty for the expression and promotion of purity is based upon the fact that the character of an individual is the most important part about us. What should be

noticed about me, or any of you, is our character. We should put a lot more emphasis on developing a beautiful and godly character than we do on anything else. The Apostle Paul does not say we should neglect the outward appearance, or be unconcerned about how we look. But from the apostle's teaching we can see that a lot of people put a tremendous emphasis on outward, physical attractiveness, while they neglect what is truly beautiful. Christians should always be attired in such a way that it is an expression of a desire for purity.

On this issue we can't conform to the world around us. Sadly, the church many times is hand in glove with the world around us. An understanding of the purpose of our bodies is very fundamental. The world says if you are blessed with an attractive body, it is an asset to be used for your benefit. Use it to get what you want. What does God say? God says that my body is His temple, and the members of my body belong to Him.

Think about that, young people. If you get that riveted in your mind, it can help you so much in overcoming sin and temptation. The members of our bodies belong to God and are to be used only for His purposes. He wants to dwell within us. Our bodies are to be God's temple, so we must be careful how we use the bodies He has given to us, to honor God and not to honor ourselves.

In our culture today there is an extremely high value placed on sexual attractiveness. I would say people actually make idols and worship their own bodies. They spend a lot of time and money and make a god out of it. They make a god out of what should be the temple where God is enthroned within. They make a god out of the temple and worship the body. There are two different perspectives. On the one hand, the world says that your body is created beautiful to either advertise or to get what you want, and it would be a shame to cover it up and not show it. On the other hand,

the Christian says my body is the temple of God. God resides in my body. He dwells in here and I'm to use this to bring honor and glory to Him. These are two entirely different views.

Sometimes I think there are two reasons why people are immodest. The first is because of ignorance. Some persons are simply unaware what they should do or should not do. The second is wrong motives—people do not care enough what God says about the issue. Christians can be incredibly naive on these issues, but I hope that is not true for any of us. Not only can Christians be naive, they can be very disingenuous.

Let me just give you a very brief example. You have a man in the world who is designing clothing. He has absolutely no problem in telling you his product is being designed to be sexually attractive, to expose the body, and make it attractive to the opposite sex. He has no problem admitting this to you, because that is what he is doing. A Christian goes and buys the garment and claims it is not really happening—implying if you have a problem with this, it is the purity of your mind that is the problem. If you would be pure you wouldn't think such thoughts. The worldly man designed the piece of clothing to do precisely what it is doing. He wants it to do that.

We need to understand that when we purchase clothing, there are a lot of people who do not have our perspective. We need to understand what is happening, and we need to be careful and discerning in these issues. There is clothing available that is modest and we need to look for such things. We need to realize that the world is trying to promote something that is not consistent with Christian principles.

I was working at a home a number of months ago. The family had the Oprah Winfrey show on television in the room where I was working. I don't know much about her show, but they were modeling clothing and saying this was something you would wear on a date. So I looked to

see what they were showing. It is interesting to observe their perspective. Well, what they modeled wasn't something I would give to any of my daughters to wear on a date. But the television program reflected the perspective of the world and its value system—when you are out on a date, you want to promote your sexuality.

That is where the world comes from, but we should come from an entirely different perspective. That is not at all what we are after. If you want a way to establish a miserable marriage, and wish you hadn't married the person you did, just marry someone who is only attracted to you physically. Try to lure him this way and marry the person—the same is true whether you're a man or a woman—and you will start out on the wrong foot. You will have a lot of regrets along the way, because what happens is that you short-circuit the process that I believe is so essential for building a foundation for a good marriage. You never establish spiritual and emotional oneness, something which should be worked on prior to physical oneness. As a result, the spiritual unity never takes place. Many times such persons are dissatisfied and eventually go out looking for someone else. We need to be careful, because that is what the world is promoting. That is how worldly persons think.

Recently there was an article in a local city newspaper about the new styles that are in for teens. Some of you may have read it. According to the writer, a more trim look is in for guys and girls should be sexy in their appearance. That's not the perspective we have, but the world around us does. We need to live in a way that honors God. If we're going to do that, we have to live with values which are just the opposite of those of the world in so many ways. We cannot buy into the culture around us. If we do, we are selling out.

I have a lot of admiration for Josh McDowell and the things he produces.

He works with Christian teens. Among other things, McDowell does surveys, especially of evangelical teens—in his surveys he borrows extensively from George Barna. He decries the amount of sexual activity among teens prior to marriage. The statistics are way too high and he finds them totally unacceptable—as well he should.

If we insist on feeding at the same table as the world—dressing the same, going to the same movies, reading the same books, and watching the same television shows—how can we expect the fruit which is produced from the food we eat to be different from that of the world? It's not going to happen. It will not happen in evangelical circles unless we say we are not going to do those things anymore. We have to find our nourishment from more wholesome sources. If you feed on things that are sensual, and you promote those kinds of things, the end product and the fruit will be exactly the same.

The decision is up to us. It will take a commitment on the part of every one of us. I don't think modesty is always going to be an easy thing. Dad, it will mean that you are going to have to be a leader in your home on the issue. You will have to take a stand, which means you must *know* where *you* stand. There may be a time when you're going to have to return a purchase to the store, because at home you saw that it doesn't meet the standard of modesty you believe is essential. One way we break down is when we think, "Oh well, we bought it. It's embarrassing to take it back. We'll just wear it." So we start lowering our standard.

We have to be consistent with the standard of modesty to which we believe God has called us, and we need to apply it consistently, and be willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary in order to put it into practice. Modesty protects the sanctity of sexual relations. That is one reason God put it there. We don't advertise before all the world, and

we don't sell out to the highest bidder. Just watch what happens to cultures around the world. Once they begin down the road where immodesty does not matter, watch what happens almost every time. Eventually the society becomes perverted. Why? Because people become desensitized.

That is what happens to persons who become involved in pornography. They get hooked, and once they get into it they have to do something worse to get the same high. So they get into perverted things. A terrible tragedy takes place. Persons slip into a vicious cycle.

I believe a similar thing happens in society. Once people go down this same road, for them to get the same kind of charge out of something, it has to be worse. Once a society goes down that road, and we see it happening in America, things have to keep getting worse to produce the same charge. The trend just keeps going progressively downhill.

God put modesty in place to protect the sanctity of the sexual relationship so it remains within the confines that God has designed, which is within marriage. We do not promote it outside of that context. We should not try to create an impression contrary to the Christian profession and desire for purity. I believe a Christian should never attire himself in such a way as to promote something that is inconsistent with a witness for purity.

If we are going to value modesty, we have to move from an "I can't" perspective to one which says, "I want to honor God." Do you get what I'm saying? Sometimes we think: "I can't wear this. I can't wear that. I'm not allowed to wear this. The reason I don't wear that is because I'm not allowed to wear it." Somehow we have to get from that perspective to one where the basis is: "I want to honor God." I want to honor God in the way that I live, in my attire, and in my appearance, in a way that is a good reflection of one who is a follower of Christ. When we are committed to honoring God,

we will be different from those around us, because there are a lot of people who come from a totally different perspective.

Let me say this to you very kindly. There is not one standard of modesty that applies to women and a different one that applies to men. There needs to be consistency in our belief and practice of modesty. As husbands and fathers we have a responsibility in teaching our children and in encouraging and supporting our spouse in the practice of modesty. Men in general are stimulated visually to a greater degree than the feminine gender. How men are affected by immodesty can be different than how a woman is affected by it. This gives to men a responsibility to help their wives and daughters understand modesty and the effect of immodesty from a masculine perspective. We must have a determination to honor God.

You must understand that the first reason for modesty is because of God. God doesn't have a problem with sexual attractiveness. That's not the issue.

Christ within does purify the heart, but we still bear the scars and marks of sin. All of us battle the carnal nature that though crucified still begs for our attention. Until the day God takes us home, and forever separates us from our sinful nature, we will never be entirely pure. So in this life we need to clothe ourselves to honor God, as an acknowledgement to Him that we don't have our clothing of light. I am waiting for that day. It is tragic when people seem to say to God: I don't care about that. We should not reflect such an attitude toward God, because He is very concerned about the details of our lives. Even though God does not give us a lot of specifics about the subject of modesty, He very clearly lays out basic principles in Scripture. On the day of judgment, God will hold each one of us accountable for how we have applied these Biblical teachings in our lives. ■

—Sermon preached at Sharon Conservative Mennonite Church in Sugarcreek, Ohio, on May 23, 2004. Reprinted with author's permission.

Sunday Clothes

by David L. Burkholder

I grew up in a time when we had a special set of Sunday clothes. We wore them to church on Sunday and to special events like weddings, funerals, special church meetings, and the like. They were more dressy than our work clothes. Mother always wanted us to "look our best" on those special occasions. And it just seemed right to dress up more to worship the Lord than to go to the job. And it still does.

Today, however, we're seeing more and more "Monday" clothes in Sunday worship. And it disturbs me. I fear it shows a too-casual attitude toward our holy God

who is the object of our worship. Now I know one can worship the Lord in blue jeans and a lumberjack shirt. A number of years ago I visited a friend's church in a rural community on a Sunday morning. I was a little surprised to see among the Sunday-dressed worshipers a man in bib overalls. However, as "Brother Robert" shared his testimony that morning concerning the Saviour's work of grace in his life, I had no doubt about his inner experience or the attitude of his worship. And, given the setting and circumstances, I had no doubt but that he was wearing his "Sunday best." He was not

wearing overalls just to be different or casual, of that I was certain. Today that is not always certain.

The Lord we worship is a holy God. He is purity and holiness personified. There is no taint of uncleanness or impurity about Him. And He demands holiness and respect from His people. I have been impressed with the clothing requirements God established for Aaron and his sons to wear when ministering before Him in the priest's office on behalf of the people of Israel. In Exodus 28:2 God gave instruction to Moses to "make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and beauty." The rest of Chapter 28 spells out in detail the specifications for those garments. They were elaborate and intricate. They were to be worn by Aaron and his sons "when they come into the tabernacle . . . or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place, that they bear not iniquity, and die."

God's requirements for those ministering in His presence in His holy place were strict. They had to dress according to His standards and be pure and upright in their personal lives. The penalty for failure to comply was death. God took seriously the defense of His holiness and purity. I find it interesting that these garments were to be for "glory and for beauty." Their purpose was to display the glory and beauty of God. The *Jamison, Fausset, and Brown* commentary states: "They are called 'holy' [garments] simply because they were not worn on ordinary occasions but in the discharge of sacred functions." They were special garments to be worn on special occasions, in the service of the Lord.

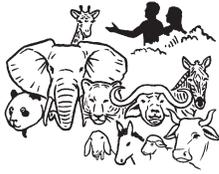
Now you may say, yes, but that was Old Testament, and we are no longer living under the Law and its restrictions and requirements. Thankfully true. However, I believe that in the giving of dress regulations for those who came into His holy presence in the Old Testament era, God established a timeless principle that applies to worshipers in all ages. His holi-

ness is not diminished from what it was then. The worshiper's reverential awe of God's holiness and purity should be no less either.

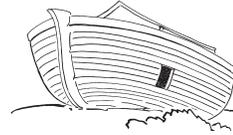
When approaching God in worship we must be keenly aware of His majesty and holiness. He is no ordinary person. One dare not come thoughtlessly, carelessly, or casually into His presence. His very being demands respect and reverence. Does this mean that we need to wear a proscribed manner of dress in order to worship Him acceptably? Not necessarily. The New Testament principles for the Christian's attire speak to modesty, simplicity, and economy. There are many warnings against ostentation and showiness, that manner of attire which draws attention to oneself at the expense of God. These must be avoided. And it is true that the attitude of the heart is the most important factor when approaching God in worship. But, as one writer has said: "The body is the shell of the soul, and dress the husk of that shell; but the husk often tells what the kernel is." What is in the heart will inevitably show itself on the surface. And in so doing, uncover the true attitude of the heart. We simply cannot hide our intentions.

Therefore, to apply these New Testament principles to our worship attire, I believe one should be clean clothed, simply and modestly clothed, adequately clothed in body and soul, clothed with humility and reverence. I also believe that it will aid our worship if we come Sunday clothed, not Monday clothed. It will enhance our feelings of reverence and respect toward the holy God whom we come to worship.

There were dire consequences for approaching God in an unfit manner in the Old Testament era. And we worship the same holy God today. So when we gather to worship let's show our respect to God and come in holy reverence and in attire that lends itself to our expression of reverence and worship. God will be honored, and we will be blessed. ■



Beginning Issues



The Accuracy of Genesis

by John Mullet

The historical accuracy of Genesis is often called into question. It is often labeled as poetical, mythical, or some other form of literary fiction because it does not fit the claims of modern (so-called) science. However, as can be seen with some study, to adopt one of these views or some form of them we soon run into a host of other problems. For example, if Adam were a mythical character then his act of rebellion (original sin) must have been a deed in a tale and suddenly the primary theme of the whole Bible, God's plan of redemption, becomes a huge question mark logically. If Genesis can be of mythical nature and still be harmonized with the rest of Scripture we would expect the writings of some of the authors outside of Genesis to reflect this. Let's take a peak at a few passages and see how some of these writers viewed Genesis.

Luke, the writer of two of the New Testament books (Luke and Acts of the Apostles), is considered by many to be an excellent historian, including Sir William Ramsey regarded as one of the greatest archaeologists ever to have lived. He wrote of Luke: "Luke is a historian of the first rank. . . . This author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians."¹ In Acts 7:1-50 Luke records Stephen's defense to the Jewish Council and Stephen builds his defense for his faith by starting in the beginning of

Israel's history with Abraham (Acts 7:2-9), whom the Jews viewed as their father (John 8:33-39). Stephen takes them back to the "founding father," as it were, of Israel and builds the rest of his argument on that foundation. If Genesis is not literal history his whole argument would be meaningless, but judging by their response we see the Jewish Council knew the history of Genesis as being true as well, even if they chose a wrong response to what they heard. If it were meaningless and nothing more than myth they might have laughed him to scorn or perhaps they would even have labeled him a madman, but his speech could not have had the impact that it did in which it cost him his life. If Genesis were not literal history, then Acts 7 loses its context and makes absolutely no sense. By recording Stephen's defense as part of his second treatise to Theophilus² Luke is putting his own credibility on the line. Just as Stephen did, he understood Genesis to be literal history and the people, places, and events recorded in it to be historically accurate.

While we may not know for sure who wrote Hebrews (many credit the Apostle Paul) there is evidence the writer also viewed Genesis as literal history. In Hebrews 7:1 he writes, "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning

from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him.” Clearly he is citing Genesis 14:18-20³. Melchisedec reveals to us the type of high priest Jesus is (Hebrews 7:12-17) and if he is not a literal historical figure then the foundation of Jesus being high priest of a new (eternal) order is destroyed and we should still be under the Levitical order. Of course that order finds its roots in Genesis as well!

Jude in verse 14 mentions Enoch, “The seventh from Adam”⁴ referring to the genealogy of Genesis. If we go back to Genesis 5:1-18 and check the genealogical record there, we find that Enoch is listed as being the seventh generation starting from Adam. If Jude did not believe Genesis history to be accurate and literal why would he reference a prophecy by a mythological character to build his case of apostasy in the church or why would he bother stating precisely in which generation Enoch lived?

The passages used in this article are far from isolated cases. In fact the opposite is true; most of the Bible depends on Genesis for its foundation and if we mythologize Genesis what we are left with is a collection of myths from cover to cover. For example, Genesis is alluded to in every New Testament book except for Philemon, 2 John, and 3 John. Of the fifty chapters in Genesis, only seven (20, 24, 34, 36, 40, 43, and 44) are not quoted or cited in the New Testament. I believe our choice is clear: We must accept Genesis as literal history or be willing to allow the rest of the Bible to be compromised as well. Any efforts to harmonize a mythical Genesis with the rest of the Scriptures is illogical at best and can lead to blasphemy. ■

ENDNOTES

1. See Archaeology and the Bible at [http://www.mindspring.com/~mamegee/grace archaeology.html](http://www.mindspring.com/~mamegee/grace%20archaeology.html).
2. *Acts 1:1*. The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.
3. *Genesis 14:18*. And **Melchizedek** king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and

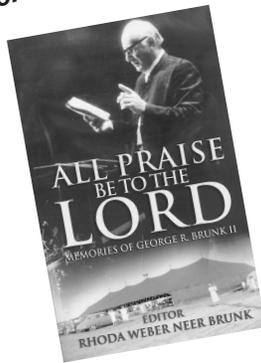
he was the priest of the most high God. *Genesis 14:19*. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. *Genesis 14:20*. And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

4. *Jude 14*. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.

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Biblical Church Membership

by Craig Alan Myers

The only institution ever directly begun by Jesus is His church. In Matthew 16:18, He said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it." Ephesians 5:25 says that Christ "gave himself for the church." Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, before He died on the cross, was for the church. He gave apostles, prophets, and evangelists to build up the church (Ephesians 4:11, 12). Paul instructed Timothy on proper order in the church (1 Timothy 3:15). Most New Testament letters were written to specific bodies or assembled groups of believers, and were often named by the city in which the church was located. Jesus did not merely die for the salvation of individuals; He established that Christians are a part of a larger body, His church. The New Testament assumes that Christians "connect" to a local church where they live out their commitment to Jesus.

1. Church Membership Is Scriptural

While the New Testament does not explicitly state that the church is to have an official roster of members, it is obvious that in the early church, people knew who was in or not in the local church body. There is a sound basis to state that a members' roll is a legitimate and useful tool.

For example, Acts 1:15 says that "the number of names (of those meeting in the upper room before Pentecost) together was about a hundred and twenty." Likely, someone counted and had a list of the names of those present. After Pentecost, the Bible says that the Lord added to the church "daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). It is quite possible that there was some form of record keeping as Luke was told how many people

were being added to the church regularly.

First Timothy 5:9 mentions a list of widows who needed financial assistance from the church. If a special roster was kept for this purpose, it is likely that there was a list or lists of members in good standing in the local church bodies wherever they were established. In 1 Corinthians 5:2, Paul called for the disfellowshipping of a wayward member of the Corinthian church, after that member refused to respond to lesser forms of correction. Formally excluding a member presupposes formally including him. If membership lists were unknown, it would have been difficult to practice church discipline, as no one would know for sure who was in good standing and who was not.

Finally, 1 Corinthians 14:40 says, "Let all things be done decently and in order." A members' list helps maintain church order and prevents confusion. The real purpose of identifiable membership is to supply an effective means through which the organized body of Christians can fulfill its responsibilities in the Great Commission.

2. Essential Requirements for Church Membership

The conditions for membership in the local body of believers must reflect the truths of Scripture and our willingness to abide by them. Those conditions are:

1. Awareness of having been born again (John 3:3). The primary requirement is that we have experienced the new birth (Acts 2:37-41; Romans 10:9, 10);
2. An obligation to be obedient to God's Word with baptism and participation in the ordinances set forth in the New Testament (Acts 8:29-39; 1 Corinthians 11:2-34);

3. Evidence of new life in Christ and spiritual growth (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:22);
4. Willingness to serve in the local church, using the gifts given by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12);
5. Commitment to the church's doctrinal positions (2 Timothy 1:13, 14). One should join a local fellowship primarily out of agreement with its teachings, rather than enthusiasm for its programs or love of its building.

3. The Meaning of Local Church Membership

What does it mean to be a member of a local church? It means you have made a commitment (Romans 12:1). We are no longer conformed to this world's directives, but instead we take our orders from heaven itself. When we join the local church, we state publicly that we are taking up the banner of Jesus Christ as expressed through His local congregation. We are saying:

"I am here—in this local body."

"I will be here—to worship and to serve in this local body."

"I will serve—gladly when called upon in this local body."

"I will pray—that Jesus Christ will be glorified in this local body."

"I will give—of my time, talents, and possessions to build up this local body."

We are also saying, when we join a local expression of the church, "I agree."

"I agree—in the doctrinal or confessional stands of this congregation."

"I agree—in the practices of this local congregation."

"I agree—in the essential program of this local congregation."

To join a local church means that you are making yourself accountable to other believers in a formal way. For example, in Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira had converted to Christ and joined the local congregation in Jerusalem. They made certain commitments, but then decided that

those commitments were too costly to uphold. So then, they broke their faith with the church, lied to the congregation and God, and as a result were accountable to the church leadership.

We are accountable to the church body of which we are members. Elmer Towns, writing on church growth and leadership, says that people "don't do what others expect, but what others inspect." In other words, apart from Biblical accountability, Christians are likely to grow lax in their work and testimony. Members of the church are also responsible to every other member of the church. When you associate with the local church, you are asking for help in keeping true to your baptismal vows, and you are pledging your support in helping others stay faithful as well. Mark Dever points out in *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, "By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members of that local church know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We increase others' expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of this local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve us in love and to encourage us in our discipleship." Every believer in Christ should become an integral part of a local organized group of believers, and make a firm commitment to it.

Being a part of the local church means you have publicly identified with a local expression of the universal church of Jesus Christ. The members may be known by their church, and the church can be known by its members. You are not merely "floating" from one body to another, but are known as a part of a definite local church body.

4. The Benefits of Local Church Membership

The church, when operating Biblically, serves spiritual food through the preaching

and teaching of the Word of God. There are inherent limitations to studying the Bible on one's own. For example, one may focus on one book or portion almost exclusively. However, in the local church, the Bible comes alive as it is taught and studied in context. Ministers and Sunday school teachers ideally point out the original occasion and theme of the Scriptures they are teaching, and then apply that Scripture to today's living.

A person may receive great benefit from listening to recorded sermons; some may greatly enjoy videos of their favorite Bible teachers or Christian music groups; certainly printed messages and books are valuable. However, the difference between these avenues of learning and regularly gathering with the church for worship and instruction is the very presence of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God, taught in the fellowship, allows more opportunity for false views to be exposed, and to honor sound perspectives. The Bible is then applied to real-life situations, as real people bring the Scriptures to bear on the issues that confront us from day to day, whether in parenting, workplaces, relationships with others, or basic Christian living.

The church affords its members spiritual fellowship and support. God never intended that His people be hermits. The early church in Acts 2 continued in fellowship. Participation in the local church brings growth in our maturity as believers. We share our experiences of living the Christian faith, helping others to draw on our own struggles and to find victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. We have opportunities to give—to give of our time in developing our spiritual gifts; to give of our material goods as God takes our portion and multiplies it in gifts to many others; to give of ourselves which helps us look beyond our own mere concerns to the needs of others.

The great sequoia trees of California are some of the largest living things on earth. Yet, one seldom sees a sequoia

standing by itself. Scientists tell us that the sequoia has a relatively shallow root system and that if storms come, a single tree can be felled easily. Nevertheless, a grove of sequoia trees intertwines its roots together, and that provides support for each tree in the face of the storms. It is a marvelous picture of the importance of the church as its members support, uphold, and encourage one another.

We further have the need of regular confession and reconciliation with others (James 5:16). Sometimes the confession is that of our own weakness; sometimes it is the confession that God does help His people. We have occasion to "confess our trespasses to one another." We also have the benefit of forgiving one another, as Christ has forgiven us. David Hoke writes, "God puts us together with a variety of people. He puts us with people we like and people we like less. He puts us together with people who fit our comfort zone and people who do not. We need them and they need us."

The local church supplies the primary arena for spiritual service and exercise (1 Timothy 4:7). That service involves *evangelism*. We find the church as a solid base from which to take the Gospel of grace into the world around us. We tell the Good News, we bring the unsaved in with us, they trust Christ, and then are baptized in obedience to Christ's command.

That service involves *teaching and learning*. Gifted teachers instruct others, who then reproduce that sound teaching to others, from generation to generation. Not all are teachers, but all are disciples, and can learn more of God's Word and how to apply it.

That service involves *spiritual gifts* (1 Corinthians 12). Every Christian receives at least one of the eighteen listed spiritual gifts. He or she then has the duty to develop that gift and use it to build up the church and to glorify God. Sometimes it is not the most prominent of responsibilities; yet even the assisting

of those who are engaging in active ministry is important. We sometimes hear of Christian workers who are “burned out” in their service. A major reason for the problem is that there is plenty of work to do in every congregation, but there are relatively few who take up the call to service. Strong local congregations have not become strong by having their members depending on someone else to do the labor. Will you not encourage someone in your church by saying “yes” when asked to fulfill a particular ministry?

Some are content to be mere spectators, but it is the foolish person who merely “sits around” when there are opportunities abounding to do great things for the Lord’s sake. Someone has compared the church to a college or professional football game: 75,000 people who desperately need exercise, watching 22 men in desperate need of rest. That is not the New Testament picture of the church. Rather, we read of an energetic body of faithful believers who are engaged in regular ministry to one another and to the world. They proclaimed the Gospel *together*; they taught believers *together*; they worshiped *together* as often as they could possibly do so.

Another benefit of local church membership is that the church protects and guides its members. God has determined that elders and deacons are to lead the church, and they are given responsibility to direct and aid the overall ministry of the church in this present age. We find their qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-13. Men of sufficient godly character are to be called forth and put to work for the benefit of the body of Christ here on earth. These leaders of the church are to watch over the flock of God so that Christians will be built up and increasingly avoid sinful living.

The church also benefits its members in bestowing a sense of ownership and identification with a local church body. The church is your church, for you are the church. We know a bit of where our

boundaries lie as distinctive Christians when we say, “I am a member of the _____ Church of the Brethren.” When one identifies himself as a member of a particular body of Christians, it provides a shorthand means of distilling one’s essential beliefs and practices.

5. The Importance of Active Participation in the Local Church

Our faithfulness and consistency in participating in church and worshipping God in fellowship with other believers is important—possibly more important than we fully understand. To assemble ourselves together with the Lord’s people at established meetings for worship (unless we are ill):

1. *Displays* a warm heart for the Lord and a love for Christ (Revelation 2:4; 3:20);
2. *Honors* the apostolic example and command of God’s Word (Acts 2:41-47; Hebrews 10:25);
3. *Grants* blessing and help for the coming days;
4. *Sustains* fellow believers with blessings and help they receive from our use of spiritual gifts and mutual ministry (1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 10:24);
5. *Pleases* the Holy Spirit who indwells each true Christian individually, and the church as a whole;
6. *Encourages* the ministers who proclaim the Word of God to assembly (Hebrews 13:7);
7. *Positively influences* others to use their gifts and encourages others to be faithful, active, and self-sacrificing (2 Corinthians 3:2, 3);
8. *Offers* a strong testimony to the unsaved, who may note the consistency of our profession and practice;
9. *Demonstrates* that we have a vision for the future of our congregation;
10. *Prevents* backsliding and apostasy (Hebrews 10:19-39);
11. *Shows* respect for the Lord’s Day, on which Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

J. Allen Blair tells of an elderly lady in a congregation who was so deaf that she could not hear the loudest noise. Nevertheless, she was always one of the first ones present at every church service. Since the pastor knew that it was completely impossible for her to hear anything that was spoken from the pulpit, one day he asked her *why* she came. She replied, "Even though I can't hear anything you say in the service, I attend because I love God's house and wish to be found walking in His paths. And the Lord gives me many good thoughts about the text of your sermon that someone always points out to me in the Bible. Another reason is that in church, I am in the very best company. I am in the presence of God and those whom He has made holy and whom He will eventually make glorious. Why shouldn't this make me happy? It is not enough for me to worship God in my home; it is my duty and my

privilege to worship Him publicly in the church services."

The church is not optional for the faithful Christian. He will seek it out, minister in it and through it, and bring others to fuller stature in Christ as a part of it. A local church is not always perfect, but it still raises a standard for God and carries a testimony for what is right and good. It still sends forth the true Gospel. It still encourages and builds godly living. It still is the fullest expression of His body in this present age. Making a commitment to the local church is more than adding a name to a roll book. It means taking the responsibilities along with the privileges, and saying "No" to the world's standards and "Yes" to God's. These are good reasons to join the local church. ■

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Internet Safety

Part One

by Dan Olinger

INTRODUCTION

Like any other place in a fallen world, the internet is not safe. That is, you should no more allow a child to roam the internet unsupervised than you should drop him off in Times Square and tell him to have fun and meet you in three hours. There are pitfalls, and there are evil people who are probably more cunning than he is.

On the other hand, there are such people and places in your neighborhood, too, and you wouldn't refuse to let a child out of the house just because the world is a dangerous place. There are things he needs that you can't provide if he never goes outside. Much of parenting and

teaching is the careful balancing of risk and reward, of danger and duty.

The internet is just like your neighborhood, only bigger. Yes, there are dangers, and we need to approach them responsibly. But supervised exposure to the internet, even for very young children, is too valuable to avoid simply out of fear. The internet provides free or nearly free access to virtually limitless information resources and allows communication at a capacity and speed unimaginable a generation ago.

So how do we access the internet responsibly? The first step, obviously, is to be aware of the dangers; the second is to take steps to minimize, if not eliminate, the risk. The internet comes with

two types of dangers: technical dangers to your computer system, and dangers to your person.

TECHNICAL DANGERS

Spam

Spam is unsolicited e-mail; the term is usually more narrowly applied to unsolicited *commercial* e-mail. Spammers get your e-mail address from any public place; the simplest way is to “harvest” addresses from directories of users in ISPs (internet service providers), such as AOL, or from public forums such as eBay. If you use such services, you will be spammed.

It’s possible to get a free e-mail address that you don’t intend to use for actual communication and do your public business (say, at eBay) with that address. Free e-mail accounts are available from Yahoo (<http://mail.yahoo.com/>), Google (<http://mail.google.com/>), Hotmail (<http://mail.hotmail.com/>), and other sources. You can then carry on your actual e-mail correspondence with an account from an ISP that doesn’t publicly post its directory.

Still, it’s difficult to avoid any public use of your e-mail address; the only practical solution is to use e-mail filtering software. Most ISPs provide some sort of spam filtering capability in their e-mail programs. Similarly, providers of the free e-mail accounts listed above provide a way to “report” spam so that your account will get smarter and smarter over time at filtering out messages you don’t want to receive.

To get even better protection, you can buy a separate spam-filtering software package to install on top of your e-mail. For a recent review of such packages, see <http://spam-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/>.

Spam will always be with us. Laws aren’t likely to help; much current spam is blatantly violating existing laws, and even though the illegal spam almost always includes a way to reach the perpe-

trator, spammers are rarely if ever prosecuted. Filtering appears to be the only recourse for the time being.

Pop-Up Ads

A founding concept of the internet is that “information wants to be free.”¹ Some websites have tried to charge for access to their content; with the exception of pornography sites, few have been successful. Thus, many websites try to make money by selling advertising. They have a right to do that, and if you want their content badly enough, you’ll keep going back even though the ads annoy you. The favorite ad style for the moment appears to be the “pop-up” ad, which opens a new window showing the ad, usually on top of the window you really want to see.

Software is available to block these pop-ups. One free solution that works reasonably well is the Google toolbar (<http://toolbar.google.com/>). A number of other programs offer pop-up blocking as well; search on “pop-up blockers” at Google.

Spyware

Spyware is software that sits quietly on your computer and does things you don’t know about. Typically it comes as part of a “free” software package you download from the web. The benefit the company gets, and the reason it gives you the game or the utility “free,” is that the spyware communicates back to the publishers whenever you’re online, passing along information that the publisher deems useful. Aside from the serious privacy implications that spyware raises, it also slows down the performance of your computer, whether or not you’re online.

In some cases, the program is useful enough that you’re willing to put up with the module running in the background. A couple of games on my home computer, for example, are favorites of my children, and I don’t mind the minor effect on performance. But in most cases you don’t

care *that* much about the program, and you'd just as soon dump the spyware.

There are a good many spyware blockers and cleaners available. One that works well, and is available for free trial and any voluntary donation, is Spybot Search and Destroy (<http://www.safer-net-working.org/>). Updated data files are regularly available for free download. For other options, search for "spyware blockers" on Google.

Viruses

The term *viruses* is now generally used to refer to a number of malicious programs that do nasty things to your computer system; technically, computer technicians distinguish among viruses, worms, and Trojan horses,² but the distinction is not important for lay users.

Viruses get onto your computer when you either download them (from the internet or a disk) or receive them via e-mail. The key to preventing their arrival is to download only from trusted sources and to open attachments to e-mails only if you are sure they are safe. But knowing that can be difficult; many viruses e-mail themselves to everyone in the address book on the computer they've infected, so the fact that the e-mail is from someone you know is no guarantee that the attachment is safe.

The best solution is to buy and install a good virus protection program. The best ones are reasonably priced, and the dangers to your system from being unprotected are significant, so don't try to cut corners on this. The standard anti-virus programs are Symantec AntiVirus (http://www.symantec.com/home_homeoffice/products/overview.jsp?pcid=is&pvid=nav2006) and McAfee VirusScan (<http://us.mcafee.com/root/package.asp?pkgid=100&cid=16269>). (Incidentally, both companies also sell programs that combine several of the technical security protections discussed above; see Symantec's Internet Security [http://www.symantec.com/home_homeoffice/products/overview.jsp?pcid=is&pvid=nis2006] and McAfee's Internet Security Suite [<http://us.mcafee.com/root/package.asp?pkgid=144&cid=17936>].) For other recommended antivirus software, see <http://antivirus.about.com/>.

For information on specific viruses, see libraries at Symantec (<http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/global/vinfodb.html>) and McAfee (<http://vil.nai.com/vil/default.aspx>)

Hackers

Hackers are computer users that break into systems where they are not authorized.³ It's not very likely that a hacker will seek access to your personal computer to access information on its hard drive, although that's possible. More likely, a hacker will attempt to take control of your computer so that he can send out spam from it, thereby hiding his identity from those who receive the spam. (It will look like your computer sent it, because it did.)

The solution to hackers is called a firewall. Many firewalls for home computers are available (search for "firewall" on Google), but I like the one from Zone Labs (<http://www.zonelabs.com/>), because it works well and there's a free version.

PERSONAL DANGERS

There are several kinds of danger on the internet that can harm you personally. We'll discuss four: sexual predators; violations of privacy, including identity theft; false information; and objectionable websites.

Sexual Predators

It's a truism on the internet that "nobody knows you're a dog"⁴; that is, you can pretend to be someone or something you're not, and the person on the other end is none the wiser. As a result, there are multiple cases of sexual predators posing as children in internet chat rooms, forums, and instant messaging sessions, establishing contact with a naïve child, acquiring personal information, and arranging a physical ("f2f," for

“face to face”) meeting for the purpose of sexual assault.

The best protection against such predators is privacy—that is, refusing to give out private identifying information. Children should be told never to give out, for example, the name of their town or school. Once a predator has that information, he can then ask, “What’s your uniform number on the soccer team?” and he has ample information to make physical contact.

It is possible for predators to obtain such information more indirectly, and occasionally a child will give out compromising information without any awareness that he has done so. The child should also be instructed, then, never to agree to meet anyone he has interacted with online, without his parent(s) present.

For more details, see the summary of the problem at http://www.crisisconnectioninc.org/sexualassault/internet_child_sexual_predators.htm. See also much helpful information at <http://www.prevent-abuse-now.com/index.htm>.

Violations of Privacy

A closely related issue is violation of privacy. In this case, we’re usually talking about adults, not children. Users should be aware that they may place information on their computers that can be communicated without their knowledge; for example, in early versions of most web browsers, the user could enter personal information that could be read by any website he visited. (More recent versions, such as Microsoft’s Internet Explorer 6, no longer provide that function.) Further, Internet “cookies,” which websites use legitimately to personalize the user’s experience on the site, can give clues to where the user has been by storing that information on the user’s hard drive.⁵

In my experience, people who behave themselves rarely need to worry about such privacy violations; if you behave in private in such a way that you’re ashamed of nothing, then you risk nothing

if those activities become public. But there are important exceptions to that principle, most obviously financial ones: if your Social Security number, financial account numbers, or passwords become public, then you are at risk for identity theft and consequent financial loss.

The best protection against identity theft is to engage in financial transactions in person. But nobody wants to be that limited; we like to make purchases online, do our banking online, and engage in similar financial activities with convenience. To minimize the risk, follow two simple rules:

- Deal only with sites you contact first, not with those that approach you by e-mail or in other ways.
- Deal only with sites that have a “secure server,” which encrypts your financial information for transmission over the internet. A site with a secure server will typically say so prominently before asking for information, such as credit card numbers.

A very common method for getting your personal information on the internet is called “phishing.” The thief sends you an e-mail that purports to be from a website you do business with—say, Amazon or your online bank. The e-mail may contain the official logo and in other ways appear to be legitimate. It will ask you to click on a link to update your information. The link may appear to be legitimate; for example, the following link appears to point to Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/info_update. But if you hover your cursor over it in the web version of this article, you’ll see that it actually points to a completely different website, which is not related to Amazon, and could be literally anywhere in the world. If you enter your financial information there, it will be collected by the thief and used to break into your accounts. Even more deceptive is a link that points to a numeric IP address rather than a typical domain name, such as this one: http://www.amazon.com/info_update, or one

that uses a so-called “loopback” address http://www.amazon.com/info_update (again, hover to see the underlying addresses). There are ways to find out where an IP address is actually pointing,⁶ but in such a case it is almost certain to be pernicious.

False Information

One of the great benefits of the internet is that it has allowed anyone, even someone without a lot of money, to become a publisher. The downside of this is that anyone can become a publisher—and thus the quality of what is published drops substantially. Any crazy idea can be posted on the internet, and there are typically no fact-checkers. On balance, this is a good thing; the reader can take responsibility for what he chooses to believe. But many users naïvely believe whatever they find. Urban legends are everywhere on the internet, and they can be harmless, merely an irritation, or quite dangerous.

There are numerous examples of urban legends being circulated on the internet. One of the classics is the “Craig Shergold” story. There’s a child dying in the hospital, see, and he wants to get as many get-well cards as he can before he dies. So please send him one at this address. Interestingly, this story is not false; it’s just outdated. There was a Craig Shergold, and he was in a hospital in England, but he’s all better now, thank you, and the hospital still has to hire extra people to handle all those get-well cards.

A simple policy will solve the problem: when you get an e-mail with an interesting story, even from a friend, don’t pass it on until you’ve checked it out. The standard place to check it out is <http://www.snopes.com/>, which maintains a database of urban legends that is quite well maintained. See the Craig Shergold story there at <http://www.snopes.com/inboxer/children/shergold.htm>.

Incidentally, one of the most common types of urban legends is false warnings about viruses. Ironically, well-meaning

users pass the stories around via e-mail to all of their friends, and in so doing they duplicate the function of the very viruses they’re so worried about. The two major publishers of antivirus software, Symantec (<http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html>) and McAfee (<http://us.mcafee.com/virusInfo/default.asp?id=hoaxes>), maintain libraries of virus hoaxes where users can easily check out a story before forwarding it. ■

ENDNOTES

1. This line is credited to Stewart Brand, Internet pioneer, evolutionist, environmentalist, counterculture advocate, and creator of the *Whole Earth Catalog*. The line occurs in his book *The Media Lab: Inventing the Future at MIT* (1987). The complete context clarifies his meaning: “Information wants to be free. Information also wants to be expensive. Information wants to be free because it has become so cheap to distribute, copy, and recombine—too cheap to meter. It wants to be expensive because it can be immeasurably valuable to the recipient. That tension will not go away. It leads to endless wrenching debate about price, copyright, ‘intellectual property,’ the moral rightness of casual distribution, because each round of new devices makes the tension worse, not better.”
2. For a discussion of the technical difference among these terms, see http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/viruses/intro_viruses_what.mspx.
3. The word actually has respectable roots, but it has lost that connotation in current usage. See one discussion of the issue at <http://netsecurity.about.com/b/a/076701.htm>.
4. This line originated with a cartoon in the *New Yorker*: http://cartoonbank.com/product_details.asp?mcsid=1EP4AW5LEH4D8MS66LH08E3QQ338C1P2&sitetype=1&sid=22230&did=4.
5. In Windows XP, for example, the cookies are stored at `c:\Documents and Settings\[login-name]\cookies\`, where [login-name] is the name the computer user has been assigned. The default is “Default User.”
6. See <http://www.internic.net/whois.html>.

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