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# The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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

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“leftovers” or what is not needed be placed into a savings account? One rule of thumb is to lay aside ten percent of gross earnings. Another plan is to designate a given amount each week. Other strategies can be employed. A specific plan is more effective than just good intentions. Failure to plan for saving translates into nothing being set aside. Families that discipline themselves to save prepare a cushion that will help to smooth out the rough spots in life. The habit of saving needs to be established early in home life.

When planning a budget, plan to give. Habitual, systematic giving needs to become a norm in Christian family life. Learning to give cultivates a burden for our brothers' well-being. Regular giving helps us to feel the heartbeat of our congregation and of the broader church. Bible principles show us how much to give. Godly homes take tithing seriously and plan to give generously. Freely we have received, and freely we should cheerfully give. Planned giving in our budget should be viewed as a privilege, not a burden, for a Christian home.

What should be done with money that is left over when all bills are paid, giving is in place, and savings accomplished? Should this money be spent or put into savings? Both could be utilized. Maybe a better appliance is needed; now that item can be purchased without dipping into the savings account. Or possibly a bed is needed for the guest room. Maybe the lawn mower should be upgraded at this time. On the other hand, maybe you were dipping into the savings account frequently. If so, this would be a good time to replenish that account. What we do with our extra resources is a good indication of our understanding and ability in financial matters.

Another scenario that can arise as couples plan a budget is that expenses are exceeding the income. Is there a solution to this problem? What can be

done? Usually two simple solutions can be employed to correct this problem. Increase the income, or decrease the expenses. First, try to reduce expenses. This may mean a different housing arrangement to reduce the mortgage payment, or if renting, trying to find a house cheaper to rent. Another cost reducer is to look at home furnishings; are some planned purchases unnecessary? Are expensive foods and clothing being purchased? What about travel costs? Could they be lowered or eliminated? How much is being spent on magazines and newspapers? Maybe the thermostat can be lowered or an unused room be closed off. Are lights burning when not needed? Even hosting excessive company can increase living costs. The list could go on.

Maybe a sideline job could be found to increase the income. Be careful not to sacrifice home life in the pursuit of more finances. Analyze the entire financial picture. In most cases, careful examination of expenses will reveal areas that can be trimmed to help lower living costs. Live within your means and stay there. Many blessings are found in Christian simplicity and in learning to make the funds reach.

In conclusion, every home will either manage their finances or finances will manage them. Planning a budget helps us to be more useful to Christ and the church. Keeping and executing a good budget is not easy; it takes discipline and determination. Cooperation of husband and wife is required. Both need to see the importance of a budget and be willing to make it work. Both must be involved in the unplanned things that will come at times. Then both can enjoy the beauty and benefits of sound financial management. God is honored when home finances are planned for His honor and glory. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Home Horizons*, July, 2006.

# Person of the Month:

## *Bishop Eugene Owen “Jack” Jones*

(1931- )

Eugene Owen Jones was born into a poor pastor’s family on November 7, 1931, in the state of Illinois.

It was during a church service at a little Nazarene Church in El Paso, Illinois, that “Jack,” as he was called, let it be known that he felt God was calling him to be a preacher of the Gospel. The year was 1947. He was 16 years old at the time. Jones had grown up with dreams of being a successful businessman someday. That all changed with God’s calling on his life.

That same year he had an extreme and unusual medical emergency: suffering a major heart attack due to a very defective mitral valve. Remember, Jack was only 16! He received immediate medical care and God spared his life. His doctor was interested in Jack and continued to keep close track of his medical condition. The doctor’s warning for Jack, however, was not comforting: he would never be able to survive the rigors of the pastorate. God, however, had another plan.

Jones was able to attend and graduate from Olivet Nazarene College. During his college years he met a young lady named Camillia Marsh of Albany, Indiana. Jack and Camillia were married August 5, 1955, when Jones was 24. God later blessed their family with two sons.

The couple then moved to Kansas City, Missouri, so that Brother Jones could finish his seminary training at Nazarene Theological Seminary, graduating with highest honors.

His first pastorate was in Atchison, Kansas, and as his doctor predicted it was physically difficult for him but his doctor put him on a regimen which made it possible for him to continue as a pastor. Problems in the church made his pastorate difficult as well. There were carnality and ungodly living in the church. Brother Jones loved his flock so he began to do door-to-door calling on people. As a result many were saved. He also helped the church pay its debts.

In 1961 Jack felt the Lord leading him back to Illinois. The denomination directed him to a home mission church outside Urbana. The facility was very primitive with no running water and no indoor plumbing. Brother Jones and his wife both felt the Lord had called them there when they saw how needy the people were. There were only five members in the church, one of whom had backslidden. The Lord blessed, new families were reached, and the backslider was reclaimed. After a full day of calling house to house Brother Jones would need to have two days of bed rest because of his heart condition.

The Urbana church began to grow and Jack was able to draw up a floor plan and see the new building completed. Between 1962 and 1972 there was much spiritual and numerical growth. At that point in the church’s history over 25 young people were called by the Lord into full-time service for Him. On the other hand, some people left the church because they were offended by Brother Jones’ preaching about holiness of life, but Brother Jack was not a compromiser.

Due to continued numerical growth the church needed to build another facility which was completed in 1972. More young people were giving their lives in service to the Lord, the Sunday School was growing, and God’s presence was evident in the services. All seemed well

*(continued on page 4)*

# The Greatest Danger Facing the Church

by James Hamilton Jr.

The greatest danger facing the church is probably not what most of us expect. We expect some sort of direct challenge from without, but it probably comes from within. In our day, it may well come from well-meaning pastors.

How could well-meaning pastors pose the greatest threat to evangelical churches today? Do they deny the truth?

No, the pastors who pose the greatest threat to the church today will confess belief in the right things. They will confess the authority and inerrancy of the Bible, that Jesus saves, and that He is the only way of salvation.

So how can these guys who mean well and make the good confession pose such a threat to the church?

## *The Nature of the Danger*

They are a threat because, in spite of their confession, their words and actions treat Christianity as nothing more than the best form of therapy. They treat it as self-help. They treat it as the path to better marriages, better parent-child relationships, better attitudes, and performance at work, and on and on.

Christianity is about success here and now. That, at least, is what you might conclude by listening to their sermons and observing how they do church. What “works best” guides their decision-making.

But Christianity is not *primarily* about any of that. Christianity is primarily about the gospel—about a holy God, rebels who deserve his wrath, a divine Son who takes the consequences rebels deserve, and the promise of forgiveness for all who repent and believe.

Christianity is about telling this true story in the words of the Bible so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, people come to see God, the world, and themselves correctly.

Christianity is about the triune God and the two natures of Christ.

Christianity is about the Holy Spirit supernaturally causing people to be born again so that they love this story and find in it their hope and joy.

Christianity is about trusting the word of God with all our hearts and not leaning on our own understanding—or on our own ideas about what works or what is relevant.

Christianity is about longing for the return of Christ, who, when He comes, will set up His kingdom, which means that this is not our home.

Pastors who present Christianity as therapy and self-help do not present Christianity. They are like the liberals that J. Gresham Machen denounced. Machen said that people who don't believe the Bible should be honest and stop calling themselves Christians, because they have in fact created a new religion that is not to be identified with Christianity. Similarly, the promoters of the American religion of self-help and therapeutic pop-psychology ought to be honest: they don't believe the Bible is “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

If they believed that the Bible really does contain everything we need to be saved and to live lives that are pleasing to God, they would preach the Bible from their pulpits. Not only would they preach the Bible, trusting that God has revealed what He thinks His people need, trusting that God knows better than they do what is relevant, they would organize their churches according to the dictates of the Bible rather than the dictates of the market and the corporate world.

## *Avoiding the Danger*

So how do churches avoid winding up with a pastor who will harm them by

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turning Christianity into the American religion of self-help therapy?

- 1) Look at the biblical qualifications for men in the ministry (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), and ask pastoral candidates direct questions about whether they meet these qualifications. Ask the man's references whether he lives up to these statements. Do not assume that every candidate will meet these qualifications, and don't assume that every candidate understands these qualifications. Ask him to explain the qualifications.
- 2) Since the feature that most distinguishes the qualifications for an elder (pastor) from the qualifications for a deacon is that the elder be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2), pay close attention to his teaching. Seek to discern whether this man "holds firmly to the trustworthy word as taught," whether he knows enough theology "to be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9, ESV).
- 3) Based on what you have heard of his preaching, ask yourself these questions:
  - a. Was the main point of the text he was preaching the main point of his sermon? (If he did not preach a text, removed his name from consideration.)
  - b. Does God rest heavily upon this man? Is it evident that he fears God? Can you tell that he knows that "teachers will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1)? Does he "tremble at the word of God" (Isa. 66:2)? Is the Word of God like a burning in his bones that he cannot hold in (Jer. 20:9)?
  - c. Does he think that his main task is the explanation of the Bible, which is useful and relevant (2 Tim. 3:16), or does he think he needs to organize the Bible according to his wisdom in order for it to be useful and relevant?
  - d. Is the man going to help the church understand and live on the great truths of Christianity?
  - e. Is the man a theologian, or is he just a gifted speaker with a good heart?
  - f. Do you trust this man's ability to

interpret the Bible and tell you what it means?

- 4) Consider also what you understand the calling of pastoral ministry to be:
  - a. Is pastoral ministry about "the ministry of the Word and prayer" (Acts 6:4), or is it about building a large corporation successful by worldly standards?
  - b. Is pastoral ministry about the power of the Spirit of God through the Word of God, or is it about "persuasive speech" and slick presentations? (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1-5)
  - c. Is the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20) about notching "decisions" on our belts or about making disciples who have been taught all that Jesus commanded?
  - d. Are Jesus' instructions about church discipline (Matt. 18:15-18) to be taken seriously or is he not going to practice church discipline since it might be bad for business?
  - e. Is church membership mainly about a big number for us to report, or should church members really take the "one another's" in the New Testament seriously?
  - f. Are the main tasks of pastoral ministry prayer, teaching, and shepherding souls, or is pastoral ministry more about growing the business and managing a conglomerate of campuses?
  - g. What are his plans for doing evangelism?
  - h. What are his plans for doing discipleship?
  - i. What are his plans for praying for the members of the church?

Paul told the elders (or pastors) of the church in Ephesus that wolves would arise from within their ranks to destroy the flock (Acts 20:29, 30). Likewise, Jesus said that the false prophets would be like wolves dressed in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). It might be hard to recognize these well-meaning pastors as wolves, but Jesus said we would know them by their fruits (Matt. 7:16-20).

Let me add, not every pastor who doesn't preach the Bible and who organizes the church according to a business model rather

than a biblical model is *intentionally* trying to destroy the flock. Yes, some are evil. Some are in the ministry for their own advancement. But what do we say about well-meaning pastors who propagate an un-Christian, un-biblical, worldly kind of Christianity? I think the words that Jesus spoke about those who corrupted the Old Covenant are fitting: "Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit" (Matt. 15:14, ESV).

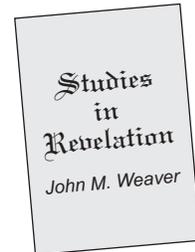
### ***Our Calling***

Let us therefore heed the words of Jesus about what a good shepherd does—"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Only Jesus can lay down His life for the sheep in the way He did at the cross. But His under-shepherds can lay down their lives for the sheep as they take up their crosses and follow in the footsteps of Jesus, loving, teaching, discipling, evangelizing, praying, and protecting the sheep from the wolves. No servant is greater than his master (John 15:20). ■

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### **BISHOP EUGENE OWEN "JACK" JONES . . . cont'd.**

but before the year would end Brother Jones would experience another major challenge—not one related to physical health but one of spiritual health in the Nazarene denomination. Jack was elected as a delegate to the Annual General Assembly meeting of the Nazarenes. The hot topic on the agenda that year was regarding divorce and remarriage. The question being posed was whether or not the denomination should approve divorce and remarriage. Was marriage to be considered permanent? Pastor Jones, along with his District Superintendent, had worked together to present the biblical view against divorce and remarriage at the meeting but shortly before the date of the meeting the superintendent contacted Jack saying that he had shifted his position and was going to vote for the proposed change. At this point Jones knew that if he were going to stand for the truth he would have to stand alone. In June, the report coming out of the committee proposed that the denomination should change their historic stand on this question. Hundreds of delegates from the U.S. and around the world were present at the meeting. When the time came for the vote Brother Jack Jones was the only one in that large meeting to stand in opposition to the proposed un-Scriptural amendment.

Jack had told the superintendent that he would leave the church if the denomination passed the proposed recommendation concerning the divorce-remarriage question. Although it was painful to leave his congregation, Brother Jones kept his word. Sixty-seven people, however, left the church as well and gathered with Brother Jack to organize Faith Community Church. Jones was not afraid to take the risk of standing alone even though he had no denominational backing or financial support. Jack's faith in God was his support.

*(continued on page 11)*

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



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

# **Follow Me . . . I Will Make You!**

by P. Daniel Stetler

What does God want me to do with my life? That is undoubtedly the major crisis confronting every earnest-hearted young person as they approach that crossroads time of their life we call graduation!

I remember that struggle well! In my case, it actually lasted several years as I struggled first with wanting my own way and later with figuring what God had in mind. It was not until the summer before my third year of college that I began getting a clear sense of direction and then it did not come in those spectacular revelations I had always expected.

The revelation of God's will actually slipped quietly through some open doors of opportunity in my life which at first appeared to lead nowhere. In the end, however, those doors started me on the path which led me to the center of God's will for my life. As I look back at those turbulent times, I find myself longing to help the many fine young people I know who are

going through that same struggle.

I believe there is some help to be found in the story of Jesus' calling of Peter and Andrew. As you remember, Jesus simply walked up into the middle of their lives and uttered these words, "Follow me and I will make you . . .!" In those simple words there is a prescription for finding your way through the maze of uncertainty which often surrounds God's will.

The first help I see comes from that little word *follow*. Very often we think God wants us to do big things. We expect direction to come in a sudden flash of revelation. But in reality, God's leadership in our lives often comes through the simple day-to-day activities as He opens one door and closes another. Opportunity knocks, needs arise, and in the simple doing of our duty, God has a unique way of revealing His direction for us.

It is also important to realize, however, that you cannot follow unless someone is

leading. For Peter and Andrew to follow, Jesus had to lead. They had to go where He went and do as He directed. A person whose life is filled with *I* and *my*, *me* and *mine*, is not likely to find any clear sense of God's direction. Jesus' simple direction was, "Follow (literally, come after) ME."

Coupled with this simple direction is a wonderful promise: "I will make you!" One of the most frequently repeated protests I hear from young people seeking God's will is: "What if God asks me to . . . ? I could never do that." You are probably right! But the whole point of this promise is not what you can do or what you have to offer to God. It is what God can do and what He has to offer you! He said, "I WILL MAKE YOU!!!"

Jesus obviously knew Peter and Andrew did not come as a package deal, fully equipped and ready for service! He knew it was going to take years of personalized instruction. It was going to take the infilling of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. There would be many missteps and even some tragic failures, but His promise was "I will make you . . ." and He fulfilled that promise in their lives.

There is an old Chinese proverb which says, "You can't carve character out of rot-

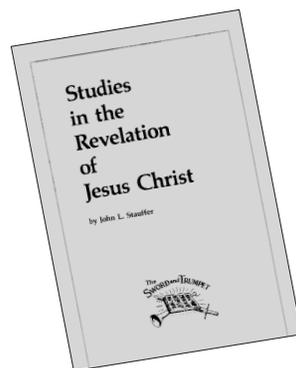
ten wood," but that proverb knows nothing of the grace of our God. Paul said God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty (1 Cor. 1:27). God will take you exactly where you are, but He will not leave you there. He will make you into exactly what He designed you to be for His glory.

Because these two young men chose to follow Jesus that day, their lives were filled with things they could never have imagined that day by the Sea of Galilee. They saw Jesus heal the sick and deliver the possessed. They saw Him call Lazarus from the grave in Bethany. They carried the bread and fish as the 5000 were fed. They saw Him walking calmly on the stormy sea, then speak it to an instant calm! Their lives were never the same because they chose to follow Jesus.

As you approach this decision-making crossroads of your life, listen for His call. He will walk up into the middle of your life and His simple words will be "Follow me . . . I will make you!" If you will respond to that call, your life will NEVER BE THE SAME! ■

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# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



## *A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**MAY 6, 2007**

### *The Marriage Supper of the Lamb*

Revelation 19:1-10

We have skipped over a lot of events since our last lesson from Revelation 7. In the intervening chapters we note the opening of the seventh seal in Chapter 8, and the subsequent judgments poured out upon the earth and its inhabitants. We also begin to see glimpses of the triumph and vindication of the saints. Here in Chapter 19 we notice a decided shift in emphasis from woe and destruction to peace and glory. John L. Stauffer in *Studies in the Revelation of Jesus Christ* says: "After meditation upon the sinfulness of the religious system of the end-time and its overthrow, it is refreshing to meditate upon that which relates to the consummation of the expectation of the saints of all ages, namely, the union of Jesus Christ the heavenly Bridegroom and the Bride."

Here in Chapter 19:1 John's vision shifts from the judgment of the great whore (Chapters 17 and 18), and the destruction of "Babylon" to a scene of praise in heaven. He heard the voice of many people praising God for salvation, attributing to Him glory, honor, and power (see also 7:9, 10). He was also praised for His faithfulness in judging "the great whore which did corrupt the earth" (see 17:1). Furthermore in that act of judgment He vindicated the cry of those who had suffered martyrdom under her influence (see 17:6 and 18:20).

While the smoke of her judgment ascended, the praise of the redeemed continued to ring out. Note again the mention of the 24 elders, the four living creatures, and the innumerable multitude, all ascribing honor to God. The crescendo of praise was so great that John could describe it only

as "the voice of many waters and the voice of mighty thunderings." Their praise was to the Lord God Almighty for His triumph over evil and the destructive forces which had resulted in martyrdom for many of His servants (see 11:15).

Their immediate ascription of praise was that now, finally, they, the redeemed, were to be eternally joined with their Redeemer at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The bride, the church, was prepared, arrayed in white, the symbol of purity and righteousness (see Ephesians 5:26-27). Her long espousal period was over, the culmination of her hopes and expectations was about to be realized. The days of darkness and trial were over.

The angel instructed John to record this blessed invitation and assured him that this was indeed "the true saying of God." In this experience was to be fulfilled the promise of the Redeemer in Revelation 3:20 and 21. This joining of the bride and bridegroom will be the fulfillment of a long running love affair between the Lamb and those He has redeemed through the ages. The message is, "Blessed are they which are called" to this event. Amen.

John was so overcome by the angel's message that he fell at his feet in worship. But the angel (could it have been Gabriel, the announcing angel?) informed John that he, too, was only a servant of God (Hebrews 1:14) and not one to be worshiped. Worship was reserved for God, and Him alone. The angel, however, recognized that John and his brethren were conveyors of the testimony of Jesus, which was the substance of prophecy now finding fulfillment.

The marriage supper of the Lamb. The invitations are out. I want to be there, don't you?

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

1. It will be very helpful, if you have not already done so, to read the entire Book of Revelation to give perspective to the scattered passages we have been studying from the book.
2. Although our visualization will be inadequate, an attempt to visualize these scenes will certainly give us a better understanding of the descriptions we read.
3. Be sure you have a good understanding of who the various groups represent that are mentioned in this passage: the multitudes, the elders, the living creatures, the servants.
4. Search out other scriptures that refer to the marriage supper of the Lamb.
5. How should this lesson challenge us to holy, careful, and expectant living? Discuss with your class.

**MAY 13, 2007**

### ***The Home of the Redeemed***

Revelation 21:1-8

Between last Sunday's lesson and today's we see depicted the destruction of the armies of the nations (Armageddon), the binding of Satan, the 1,000 year reign of Christ, and the great white throne judgment. Again, it is important that we accept God's Word as a literal record of events which He in His wisdom has determined. While it is true that some of what we read is shrouded in mystery, we should not fail to accept that God has given this record in His inspired Word for our learning and benefit. (Let us exhibit tolerance where viewpoints and interpretations differ.)

Chapter 21 begins with John's vision of a "new heaven and a new earth," for the former were passed away (see Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12). Under the judgment of God the physical universe as we now know it will undergo radical change. Even seas, depicting unrest, will disappear from the new earth. There will also be new inhabitants (2 Peter 3:13; see also Romans 8:19-22).

John also observed the new Jerusalem,

symbolic of the church, descending from heaven in bridal array. The voice out of heaven proclaims that God is now coming to dwell among men. The emphasis is on the close and continuing relationship between God and His redeemed people. An eternal, inseparable bond has been forged. J. B. Smith in *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* says: "This is a beautiful, meaningful, and oft-repeated expression of the final, unbroken, and complete reconciliation and fellowship between God and man in Holy Writ: 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.' "

As God dwells among His people He cares for them in a tender, Fatherly way—He wipes the tears of sorrow from their eyes, He banishes death, crying, suffering, and pain. Everything pertaining to former life has been changed. All things have been made new. Again John was commanded to record this statement as the true, unalterable word of the Lord God Almighty.

It is done. The work God began has been completed. He has accomplished His redemptive purposes and carried out His promised judgment upon unbelievers. Jesus the Son was the beginning and end of all that God accomplished for mankind. Nothing more need be added to the drama of mankind. All has been revealed. All has been performed. All that awaits is eternal bliss, or eternal doom.

Those who overcome will become inheritors of God's rich and full blessings. And while some of those blessings have been spelled out in this chapter, man's limited understanding is certainly incapable of comprehending the full blessing of God. He also promises to be our God and to treat us as sons. What a tremendous and unspeakable blessing awaits the redeemed!

"But the fearful and unbelieving," the lost, the unrighteous, those who have spurned the offer of the Lamb will suffer the horrible consequences of their own decision to reject the only means of salvation so freely and lovingly offered to all mankind. Their eternal doom is certain. They will burn forever in the fires of God's wrath. Their torment will be unending.

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What a tremendous contrast between those depicted in verses 7 and 8. What a joy for the redeemed. What a tragedy for the lost.

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

1. Why a new heaven and earth? Why were the first removed?
2. Find other references to the church as the bride of Christ.
3. Imagine, if you can, a time when God dwells with His redeemed saints and all is peace and joy. Perhaps some class discussion will help to visualize this setting.
4. Jesus as the Alpha and Omega serves as the bookends of human history. Briefly review His many roles relating to man throughout the scriptures.
5. With the great contrast portrayed in the last two verses of our lesson, how is it conceivable that anyone would dare to miss out on God's provision? Why will many miss out? Discuss.

## **MAY 20, 2007**

### ***Our Heavenly Home***

Revelation 21:9-11, 22-22:5

John's vision continues here with an angel who had participated in the seven plagues of judgment, offering to show him the Lamb's wife. She is no longer referred to as a bride, but now joined in marriage with the Lamb (see 19:9). John was taken by the angel to a high vantage point to see the bride, referred to as the holy city Jerusalem. John saw the city-bride descending out of heaven to earth.

There is disagreement among Bible students as to the nature of this city. Is it descriptive of the millennial city where Christ will reign, or is it rather, a description of the eternal abode of the redeemed saints? Our purpose in this study is not to attempt to decide that issue but, rather, to observe the beauty and glory of the place where God will dwell with His saints (21:3), whether millennially, eternally, or both.

What John saw stretched his ability to describe. He recognized in this city-bride the effulgent glory of God. There was no

need for either artificial or natural light (21:23 and 22:5), for God's brilliance illuminated all. John likened the city to a crystal clear precious stone, a clear, light green jasper. (His further description of the physical properties of the city are found in verses 12-21.) God's gloriously redeemed people are likened to a glorious city, built of precious stones, bathed in brilliant light.

John saw no physical temple as a center of worship in this glorious city. There was no need, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are there dwelling with God's people. God's presence was among His people so a specific place of worship was unnecessary. As we have already noted, there was also no need for a source of light; that was provided by the radiant glory of God.

We see again in verse 24 the universal reach of the gospel message extending, as we have noted before, to all peoples, tongues, and nations of the world. We also note that the powerful men of the earth will here submit their power, honor, and glory to the greater honor, power, and glory of God the Almighty.

The setting here would seem to strongly favor the millennial kingdom since there seems to be the possibility of new entrants into the kingdom (vv. 25, 26) and the potential for continuing evil (v. 27). Verse 2 of Chapter 22 also suggests the potential for continuation of the redemption process. Once the final separation has been made and eternal destinies settled, change will no longer be possible.

The picture here in the first five verses of Chapter 22 speak of a paradise not seen since the Garden of Eden, a place where there is peace, contentment, and unlimited provision. There is a spiritual reality conveyed by this scene: God has provided for man "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." He cares for His people and provides for their every need, both physical and spiritual (Psalm 84:11).

So, regardless of how one sees end-time events unfolding, we can still marvel at the gracious and ample provisions made for the redeemed by a loving and all-powerful God.

And we can be assured of living with Him in a glorious and eternal heavenly home. Forever.

***For thought and discussion***

1. Why is the picture of a bride and bridegroom so descriptive of the relationship between Christ and the church?
2. Recall that our lesson for January 28 portrayed Jesus as “The Light of the World.” Reflect again on the properties of light and how fitting for God to be compared with light.
3. Visualize, as best you can, the scene presented here of the heavenly city. What does this say about God’s power, glory, and goodness?
4. Entrance into the heavenly city is restricted. What are the requirements for entrance?
5. Eternity is forever. Should not this realization challenge us to holy living and spur us on in the proclamation of God’s saving grace to a lost and dying world? Perhaps your class could profit by discussion of both issues.

**MAY 27, 2007**

***Anticipating Christ’s Return***

Revelation 22:6-21

As we come to this final lesson in our study from the Book of Revelation, we stand in awe of God’s majesty, the severity of His judgments, and His gracious provisions for the redeemed. Truly He is, as we read in Chapter 4, the thrice holy, eternal Lord God Almighty. Here now, in the culminating verses of the book, are confirmed the certainty and imminence of Christ’s return, encouragement to faithful obedience to His Word, and warnings against trifling with the message of the book.

Eerdman says of this epilogue: “The great ideas of the entire book are repeated in the brief, striking statements, with no attempt at an exact sequence of thought. However, a real unity is given to this epilogue by the recurrence of two dominant notes—the notes of certainty and immi-

nence. The prophecies of the book are certain of fulfillment, and that fulfillment is near at hand. . . . It is beyond question that this book was written to encourage all believers to be patient in persecution, steadfast in days of trial and tribulation, assured that to be loyal to Christ is to be on the side of right, of truth, of ultimate triumph, and of eternal joy.”

John was reminded here again to openly proclaim God’s message to His servants and reiterate that these are the true sayings of a faithful God. He also pronounces a blessing on those who keep the sayings of this book, those who are obedient to God’s revealed word and will. It is of God’s nature to inform His people of His intentions and the ramifications of His actions where they are involved.

Urgency is expressed by the repetition of the phrase “I come quickly [suddenly]” and “the time is at hand.” The implication is that it is imperative to fix one’s eternal destiny while the day of grace is open. When the last trumpet sounds there will no longer be opportunity to alter one’s destiny. Christ’s coming will be instantaneous. Then He will reward every man according to his deeds (v. 12).

In confirmation of His message and authority, Jesus identifies Himself again as the Alpha and Omega (see 1:8), the first cause and the final actor on the stage of world events. He also confirms prophecy by identifying Himself as the “root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star,” thus confirming both His humanity and His Messiahship. He also confirms again that He is the One who authorized this message of comfort and warning (v. 16; see 1:1).

In verse 17 we have that beautiful invitation by the Spirit and the bride, God and the company of the redeemed, to all mankind to come, and take freely of the life-giving grace offered to those recognizing their need of salvation. In this book is the complete, final, and adequate revelation of God’s will to man. Nothing more is needed. Nothing less will suffice.

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen.” The message

is closed. The revelation of God to man is complete and finished. Jesus' return is imminent, when all of the things herein mentioned will either have taken place or will immediately take place.

John closes with his personal endorsement and benediction of grace (v. 20).

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

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

1. Perhaps it would be good as you begin your study of this last chapter of Revelation to read again the entire book for the perspective that will give on this final chapter.
2. There are three speakers in this passage. Identify each and their individual role.
3. John wrote this message approximately 1900 years ago. Part of the message at that time was the urgency of heeding. How should that urgency and the message of the book impact our living today?
4. What more can we do as part of the redeemed bride of Christ to extend His gracious offer of salvation to those who are athirst for spiritual peace?
5. As we come to this concluding lesson from the Book of Revelation, our prayer is that you have been blessed by this study, and that it has heightened your

awareness of the imminence of Christ's return and deepened your desire to live worthy of Christ's acceptance. Can you say with the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"?

*Soli Deo Gloria!* ■

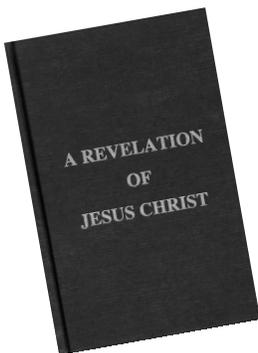
#### **BISHOP EUGENE O. "JACK" JONES . . . cont'd.**

Again God blessed the work with a building, a theological training school, and a K-12 Christian Day School. The church people have knocked on all the doors in the county—all 50,000 of them.

In 1996 and 2002 Brother Jones again experienced serious health problems, but God was gracious and spared his life yet again. On Easter Sunday of 2004 he was again in the pulpit preaching the resurrection of Christ!

Bishop Eugene O. Jack Jones has labored for the Lord for nearly 50 years. He is a man who keeps confidences. He has a strong faith in God. He has handled criticism with a Christ-like spirit and has lived out his faith in his relationship with his wife and family. Most importantly, in a time when it would have been convenient and safe to deny the faith, he stood strong, although he stood alone. May others be willing to do the same. —Gail L. Emerson

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# Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

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experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings  
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## Indian Hindu Extremists Force Christians to Worship Hindu Gods

Hindu extremists yesterday [November 6] forced Christians in the remote village of Bevainahalli, in the southern state of Karnataka, [in India], to bow down before Hindu deities and applied the vermilion mark to their foreheads. It was the second such incident in Chitradurga district in a little over a week.

At about 5 p.m. on November 6, two Hindu priests accompanied by a group of 20 to 25 Hindu extremists from the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)* and its youth wing, the *Bajrang Dal*, entered Chitradurga district's Bevainahalli village and knocked on every home's door.

Leaving Hindu residents untouched, the extremists shouted threats at those in Christian homes, ordering them from their houses to a site near the village temple. Christians, who questioned why, were slapped and ordered to start walking.

When the Christians were gathered together, one of the Hindu priests, or *Swami*, began speaking against Christianity and told them to "reconvert" to Hinduism.

The extremists then . . . compelled them to eat the Hindu offering called *prasad*.

Police Inspector K. L. Krishna only watched as the Hindu extremists violated the Christians' constitutional right to freedom of religion with this "initiation rite."

"I ensured the safety of the Christians and personally made certain no violence took place," Krishna told *Compass*.

—Excerpt from "India: More Villagers Forced to Bow to Hindu Deities" in *Compass Direct News* (<http://snipurl.com/11scw>) via Luke Kuepfer's *Kuepfer Kronicle*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Happy Darwin Day!

STRIKE UP THE BAND! Around the world today, February 12, admirers of Charles Darwin will celebrate the great man's 198th birthday with lectures, concerts, and exhibits.

Darwin Day, as it's called, is meant to be cheerful, with a bit of good-natured triumphalism, marking what celebrants see as the intellectual victory of Darwinism, the theory of evolution by the purely material mechanism of natural selection. But set aside the scientific legacy for a moment to consider the less frequently discussed question of Darwin's moral heritage. This year happens to mark another anniversary as well: a tragic one, strongly linked to Darwinian theory.

As of 2007, it is exactly a century since the key turning point in the Darwin-inspired American eugenic movement. In 1907, the state of Indiana achieved the distinction of becoming the world's first government entity to enforce sterilization of institutionalized "idiots," "imbeciles," and other individuals deemed genetically "unfit." The idea caught on.

With Washington and California following in 1909, some 30 states eventually passed similar compulsory sterilization laws by the early 1930s. California was the leader in the field, accounting for half of the coercive sterilizations in the years leading up to World War II.

By 1958 some 60,000 American citizens had been sterilized against their will. Only the horrors of Nazism succeeded in casting a pall over America's romance with eugenics, when it became widely known that

German doctors were following the lead of their California colleagues and sterilizing undesirables.

—Excerpt from “Happy Darwin Day!” by David Klinghoffer in *The Weekly Standard* (<http://tinyurl.com/2bv4tr>)

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Virginia House Passes Fetal-Pain Bill**

The Virginia House of Delegates has passed two bills that require women seeking an abortion to be informed about their decision. The first bill would require that they are informed about the risks and outcomes of the decision to have an abortion. The second bill would require them to be informed that the baby being aborted will experience intense pain.

—Source: Focus on the Family’s *Citizen Link*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Liberals Protect Chickens Over Children**

The House Judiciary Committee considered a bill Monday to increase penalties for transporting animals across state lines for fighting—largely an effort to oppose chicken fights.

Reps. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., and Peter King, R-N.Y., saw it as an opportunity to make an important point. They attempted to amend the bill with the language of the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act. It would make it a crime to circumvent state parental-notification laws by transporting a young girl across state lines for an abortion.

—Excerpt from “Liberals Protect Chickens Over Children” from Focus on the Family’s *Citizen Link* (<http://tinyurl.com/yvjwto>)

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### **William and Mary College: Cross Out, Sex Show In**

The president of William and Mary College decided a two-foot cross in the college’s chapel was too controversial, but has

allowed an “art” show depicting prostitution. He ordered the cross’s removal last year, but the “Sex Worker’s Art Show” which portrays male and female strippers in various stages of undress is all right. He said, “I don’t like this kind of show, but it is not the practice of universities to censor or cancel performances because they are controversial.” Randy Sharp, a director for the American Family Association, said that this is demonstrating a clear-cut example of anti-Christian bigotry and intolerance.”

—Source: Focus on the Family’s *Citizen Link*

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### **Activist Testifies at U.N. Conference on Burmese Army Rapes**

Burma, the country in SE Asia next to China, Thailand, Laos, Bangladesh, and India, has been implicated in Army brutality and rape by Cheery Zahau as she testified at a U.N. Conference on state-sponsored rape. She presented additional evidence and gave firsthand, heartrending testimony. She said, “Often the rapes have been carried out with extreme brutality and in some cases they resulted in the death of the victim. In one case, a woman was stripped naked and hung on a cross, in a deliberate act of mockery against her Christian religion. There is a collective understanding among the troops that they can rape with impunity. About a third of the rapes were committed by officers, sometimes in their own army camps.” She called on China and Russia to reconsider their opposition to a U.N. Security Council resolution on Burma. These atrocities are occurring in Shan, Karen, Karenni, and Mon areas. This story strikes close to home for me, because I will be living in Chiang Mai, Thailand, under IGo for eight months starting in April. I will be making forays into the countries around Thailand and possibly be working with the Karen people.

—Sources: *ASSIST News Service* and *Christian Solidarity Worldwide*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Indian Pastor Murdered**

The body of 29-year-old pastor Goda Israel was found with stab wounds in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. He had earlier received threats from Hindu extremists. He was a 2003 graduate of Emmanuel Bible Institute. The pastor, who is survived by a wife and small children, was overseeing 15 churches he had established in the area.

—Source: *Compass Direct News* and *Worthy News*

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### **Discovery Channel Documentary The Lost Tomb of Jesus Discredited**

A new documentary set to air on the Discovery Channel on March 4th asserts that Jesus married Mary Magdalene, had a son, and then died (and stayed dead). It claims to have discovered the real tomb of Jesus. Ben Witherington III, a professor of New Testament interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary, said, “This is a theory that is so deeply flawed that it deserves to be dismissed reasonably quickly.” The tombs they have discovered are engraved with the name “Yeshua bar Yosef” (Jesus, son of Joseph). However, this was a very common name in Israel during that time period. The DNA evidence which they cite is totally absurd; they don’t have samples of Jesus’ DNA to compare to! The documentary also claims statistical analyses that have been shown by scholars to be false.

—Source: *Christianity Today*

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### **Indonesian Military Continues Genocide Against Christians**

The Indonesian military (TNI) has once again unleashed terror in the highlands of Papua. Thousands of indigenous, predominantly Christian Papuans have been ethnically cleansed from their villages and driven into the inhospitable jungle where many will die.

During the 20th century, the Papuans turned from the occult, headhunting,

cannibalism, and internecine tribal war to Christ. They were evangelized predominantly by Australian and American pioneer missionaries courtesy Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) USA. The missionary story was popularized by missionary author Don Richardson, whose best-selling book “Peace Child” (now a feature film) tells how the Sawi tribal practice of making peace with an enemy through the gift of a child opened the door for even the most violent Sawi warriors to embrace the gospel.

Today the enemy of the Papuans is not their pagan tribal culture. Today nothing the Papuans do will bring peace. The TNI know they can kill Papuans with impunity. And what’s more, the Papuans know it too. The contemporary still-unfolding story of Papua is a story of the genocide of a Christian people through betrayal and abandonment, aggression, complicity, and impunity.

—Excerpt from “Papua, Indonesia, the TNI and the USA” by Elizabeth Kendal from *ASSIST News Service* (<http://tinyurl.com/22sdp2>)

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Indian Bible College Attacked**

On Wednesday, February 28, “many Christians” were injured when hundreds of suspected Hindu militants raided a Christian college in the Indian state of Orissa and beat staff members and students, investigators told *BosNewsLife*.

“Around 500 radicals forcefully entered the campus of Believers Church Bible College and their office” located in the city of Brajaraj Nagar in Orissa’s Jharsuguda district, said Sajan George, the national president of the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC), which represents churches and mission groups.

—Excerpt from “India Militants Massively Attack Bible College; Christians Injured” from *BosNewsLife* (<http://tinyurl.com/yuuuud>)

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### **Terrorist Turned Christian Faces Deportation for Talking About Islam**

Zachariah Anani knows all too well the

dangers of Islamic extremism: He embraced the ideology for several decades and found himself in the trenches of terrorist activities and a hatred that consumed his existence. But the seven men sitting in the front row of his Jan. 11 lecture in an Ontario church told a different tale: "Islam is tolerant," they said.

Anani challenged their assertion and asked one of the men to explain the penalty for Muslim conversion to Christianity. "It took three of them to admit it is death," Anani told WORLD. "So much for the tolerance."

Instead of serving as a launching pad for further debate or an avenue for moderate groups to condemn acts of terrorism, the lecture series at Campbell Baptist Church in Windsor sparked a wave of controversy and a call from local Muslim groups for Anani's arrest and deportation. The Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) says the lecture violated Canadian hate crime laws and has requested a formal investigation, while oth-

ers in the community are now claiming Anani's terrorist past is grounds for deportation.

—Excerpt from "Hate or debate?" by Jill Nelson from *WORLD Magazine* (<http://tinyurl.com.2xsp98>)

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Suicide Bomber Attempts Cheney Assassination in Afghanistan**

A Taliban suicide bomber attempted to assassinate Vice President Cheney on a visit to Afghanistan. The bomber killed 23 people and injured 20; four NATO personnel were killed. The Veep, who was at Bagram Air Force base, was immediately rushed to a bomb shelter after the blast, and was uninjured. The Taliban's knowledge of the Cheney visit shows they have penetrated local intelligence agencies.

—Sources: *News24*, *AP*, and *Reuters*

Please send any tips, stories, opinions, suggestions, or corrections to: ***hansmast@hansmast.com***

## **New Ministry to Focus on Outreach to Jewish People and Prophetic Issues**

On December 1, 2006, a group of twelve brethren met at Sugarcreek, Ohio, to consider the possibility of an outreach ministry to the Jewish people. The burden of the meeting was the need for Jewish Evangelism and the teaching of the Prophetic Scriptures in Anabaptist circles. As a result of this meeting an operating board was appointed to begin this work. This board presently consists of Art Hershberger, Leonard Wenger, Clarence Bontrager, and Steve Ulrich.

The name chosen for this new work is *Israel's Shalom Ministry*. The board is planning to hold an annual conference which will focus on Bible Prophecy and report on the activities of the organization. The first such conference will be this fall. Any persons with a burden for the Jewish people are encouraged to contact Art Hershberger at 434-983-9696. The board is looking for people who wish to work with the Jewish people or who would like to host a prophecy conference in your local area. Plans are being finalized to send the first worker to Haifa, Israel, in early spring. Due to the large number of Jews living in the United States, the possibilities here are tremendous. Tax-deductible contributions may be sent to Israel's Shalom Ministry, P.O. Box 576, Dalton, Ohio 44618. Your comments and suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

# A Christian Vision of Beauty

## Part I

by R. Albert Mohler Jr.

I have been asked tonight to talk about a Christian vision of beauty, and I am first struck by the fact that this conversation would be so rare. There are altogether too few opportunities for Christians to ponder some of the biggest questions of life. We tend to focus on the questions of urgency and the questions of immediate interest. That is not to say that such questions are improper, but it is to say that Christian thought can sometimes fall out of balance. One of the realities we face is that in a conversation like this, we are not exactly sure where to begin. Where should we begin talking about beauty?

Allow me to make a couple of preliminary observations, the first of which is this: There is something intrinsic to humanity that is drawn to beauty. There is something of an aesthetic desire in us—an aesthetic appetite. Even infants are attracted to certain objects and even faces because of complexity and color and light, those elements which aesthetic theorists have considered the very substance of beauty, form, and attractiveness. Moreover, this desire for and recognition of beauty is something unique to human beings. Dogs do not contemplate a sunset. Animals do not ponder the beauty of the landscape. It is true the heavens are declaring the glory of God, but most of the creatures on the planet are oblivious to this fact. They neither make nor observe nor appreciate art. They stage no dramas, write no music, and paint no portraits. The desire for art is something unique and nearly universal among human beings.

At the same time, we must understand that beauty is in crisis; it is a contested category. Let me suggest two reasons why this is so. First, beauty is a category in crisis

because it has been so devalued in the reigning confusion of popular culture. The fact is that we have come to use the word *beautiful* in an altogether awkward and inappropriate context. We speak of *beauty*, when what we really mean is *prettiness*, or attractiveness, or even likability. None of these things, however, is actually equal to beauty. Yet the popular culture increasingly confuses the artificial for the real, the pretty for the beautiful, and the untrue for the true—all of which are essentially one root confusion, as we shall see.

Second, beauty is a category in crisis also at the level of elite culture and academia, where philosophers who give attention to aesthetic theory are increasingly convinced that beauty is a shopworn category. It is either political, or entirely subjective, or delusional. Many of the major writers in philosophy suggest that beauty is a category we ought to discard altogether. The idea of beauty, they say, is too expensive, too contested, and too misleading.

In the history of Western thought, beauty has often been a difficult category. The Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, for example, was convinced that in the end aesthetics was a divergence from ethics, so that to be concerned with the beautiful was to be inadequately concerned for the good. Friedrich Nietzsche, the very prophet of nihilism himself, believed that the category of beauty was a symptom of the decadence and the weakness of modern humanity. Only the decadent would consider beauty important, he argued, because all that finally matters is power. Perhaps in reality, Nietzsche saw only power as beautiful.

But if beauty is in crisis in terms of the

culture, both at the popular level and among the elites, it is also in trouble in the church, where the influence of popular culture has led to confusion about what beauty actually is and why we as Christians should seek it.

A Christian understanding of beauty runs directly into the wisdom of the age by suggesting that the beautiful is simultaneously the good and the true and the real. This goes all the way back to the conversation of the ancients—especially to Plato, who understood the good, the beautiful, the true, and the real as being essentially reducible to the same thing. If there is one good, then that good must also be the true, which must also be the real, which must also be the beautiful. So the good, the beautiful, the true, and the real—the four great historical transcendentals—are unified in the One. For Plato, however, the One had no name.

Augustine, the great theologian of the patristic era, identified the One as the one true and living God. Taking Plato's metaphysical speculations into the very heart of the Gospel, Augustine suggested that Christians uniquely understand that the good, the beautiful, the true, and the real, are indeed one, because they are established in the reality of the self-revealing God—the triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He alone is beautiful, He alone is good, He alone is true, and He alone is real. That is not to suggest that nothing else reflects beauty or truth or goodness. It is simply to say that He alone, by virtue of the fact that He is infinite in all His perfections, is the source and the judge and the end of all that is good, beautiful, true, and real. For as Paul said, from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever, Amen.

Now this Christian conversation about the transcendentals opens an entirely new awareness for us. We now begin to understand that there is a moral context, a truth context, to every question about beauty. We can no longer talk about beauty as a mere matter of taste. Instantly, by affirming the

unity of the transcendentals, we are required to see beauty fundamentally as a matter of truth to which taste is accountable, rather than a matter of taste to which truth is accountable.

Thus, it violates Scripture and indeed the character of God to call something “beautiful” which is not good, or “true” which is not beautiful, or “real” which is not true. Yet if we are honest, we admit to ourselves that in our common cultural conversation, we routinely sever the good from the true, the true from the beautiful, the beautiful from the real, and the real from the good. As Christians, we alone really understand why this is so, and why it is so important.

Augustine understood that beauty was a key Christian category. Indeed, Christians cannot properly think as Christians without understanding the power of beauty. In his *Confessions* he said this: “I have learnt to love you late, Beauty at once so ancient and so new! I have learnt to love you late! You were within me, and I was in the world outside myself. I searched for you outside myself and, disfigured as I was, I fell upon the lovely things of your creation. The beautiful things of this world kept me from you and yet, if they had not been in you, they would have had no being at all.” In that confessional statement, Augustine is saying that it was beauty that was calling him. It was his Creator that was calling him, and yet he was distracted by the things of *apparent* beauty in the world. And yet he does not despise those things; he remembers that their beauty is merely a reflected beauty, derived from the fact that God is their Creator.

Augustine continues: “It was you then, O Lord, who made them. You who are beautiful, for they too are beautiful. You who are good, for they too are good. You who are, for they too are. But they are not beautiful and good as you are beautiful and good. Nor do they have their being as you the Creator have your being. In comparison with you, they have neither beauty nor goodness nor being at all.” Augustine

realizes that in order to see true beauty, he has to go to his Creator, and then, knowing the Creator, he may observe the creation and see that it does indeed bear the mark of its Maker. There is undeniable beauty in creation, but in comparison with the infinite beauty of the Creator, such finite beauty no longer has the seductive allure it once had. All earthly beauty is simultaneously validated and relativized by the contemplation of the beauty of God.

The same theme was picked up by Jonathan Edwards, who said this: "True holiness must mainly consist in love to God, for holiness consists in loving what is most excellent and beautiful. Because God is infinitely the most beautiful and excellent being, He must necessarily be loved supremely by those who are truly holy. It follows from this that God's own holiness must consist primarily in love to Himself. Being most holy, He most loves what is good and beautiful, that is Himself. To love completely what is most completely good is to be most completely perfect. From this, it follows that a truly holy mind, above all other things, seeks the glory of God and makes the glory of God His supreme governing and ultimate end."

In that brief statement, Edwards does something very helpful and very consistent with the Christian tradition. As a matter of fact, it is a necessary insight once we go to the Scriptures. If you search through the Old Testament, you will notice that the word *beauty* is really not there. Instead, it is the word *glory*. Throughout the Bible, the beauty of God is most commonly described as His *glory*. Once we understand the Biblical category of glory—that is, the reality of God in terms of His inner reality and the external manifestation of Himself—we realize that God's glory encompasses all the transcendentals. To gaze upon God is not first of all to see His beauty, but rather His *glory*.

Edwards defined beauty as consisting mostly in "sweet mutual consents." By this, Edwards meant that things are rightly set: The thing is what God declared

that it must be. In other words, beauty is achieved when the thing created most closely and most perfectly glorifies its Creator. Thus a "sweet mutual consent," or absolute harmony, exists between the created thing and the Creator.

When we look at the unity of the transcendentals, and compare Edwards' and Augustine's vision of view to our contemporary poverty concerning things beautiful, we are quickly and painfully aware that something has gone horribly wrong. Why would human beings seek to sunder the unity between the good and the beautiful, between the true and the real, between the beautiful and the true? Why would we want to call something that is ugly true? Why would we want to call something that is unreal beautiful? That is a symptom of a human sickness, and that sickness is sin.

Our understanding of beauty as a category in crisis begins not with contemporary confusion, but in the Garden of Eden, where our first parents were attracted to the forbidden fruit at least in part because it was attractive to the eyes. A false understanding of beauty—the false allure of the evil rather than the good—is a part of the story of the Fall. Thus the confusion over beauty is not merely an item of cultural consternation, nor is it merely a matter of theological debate. It is a matter of redemption. The only way out of our confusion over beauty is to know the Creator, to know Him not merely conceptually but personally, and to have our relationship with Him once again set right, something which only He can do. Then Edwards' vision of the "sweet mutual consents" might be realized—a redeemed people once again entering into the mutual consent of the good, the beautiful, the true, and the real.

*To be continued*

*This is an edited transcript of an address Dr. Mohler gave on November 14, 2005, at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.*

—Reprinted with permission from *www.AlbertMohler.com*.



# 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*

## O Word of God Incarnate



by Howe/Mendelssohn

**Lyrics:** William Walsham Howe held various positions in the Anglican clergy of England during his lifetime, which lasted from 1823 to 1897. He was ordained a minister in 1846, and in the years just prior to his death, he served as the first Bishop of Wakefield. During his lifetime, he wrote a total of fifty-four hymns,<sup>1</sup> many of which are still popular today, including “We Give Thee But Thine Own,” and “O Jesus, Thou Art Standing.”

Howe’s poetry is particularly exquisite in this hymn from 1867. Numerous scripture references are suggested as the inspiration for this hymn, one source suggesting Psalm 119:105: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path,”<sup>2</sup> while the *Church Hymnal*’s suggestion is John 1:14: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Howe expertly plays on the theme of the “Word,” using it to refer to Jesus in the first half of verse one, but then, in the latter half of the verse, using that reference as a springboard to talk about the “Word of God,” the Bible.

The middle verses fairly clearly speak of the written Word, describing different aspects of it in very picturesque language. The poet ascribes value to the Bible by comparing it to a golden jewel box, and tells of

its power by comparing it to a banner behind which God’s army is rallying. Finally, he compares it to a set of navigational equipment which directs us through dangerous waters toward the ultimate goal, Christ.

At first glance, the connection of the fourth verse to the other three may not be as obvious, but a closer look reveals that it is, in fact, an expert conclusion to the hymn, using some of the same concepts as the previous verses, but from different angles. It is a prayer for God to aid us in implementing the more abstract pictures of His Word laid out in the first three verses. The mention of the “lamp of purest gold” brings to mind the lantern in the end of verse one as well as the “golden casket” of the second stanza, while “To bear . . . Thy true light” reiterates the concept of light that is present all the way through. “O teach Thy wandering pilgrims / By this their path to trace” refers back to the “chart and compass” idea, and the last phrase states the final result: “They see Thee face to face.”

**Music:** The melody for this hymn was originally published in 1693 in the German *Neuvermehrtes Gesangbuch*, and it was not until 1846 that Felix Mendelssohn brought it to its present form for use as a chorale in

# O Word of God Incarnate

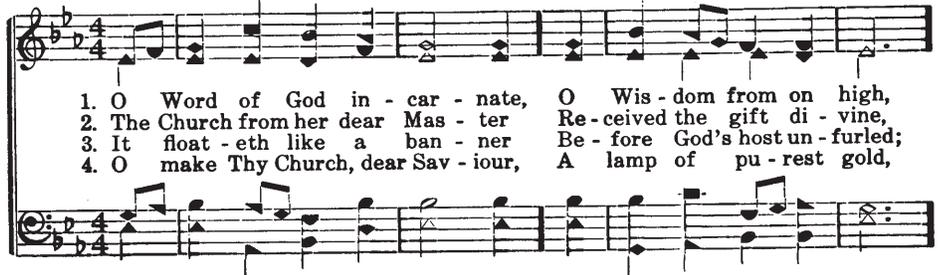
The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.—JN. 1: 14

W. WALSHAM HOWE, 1867

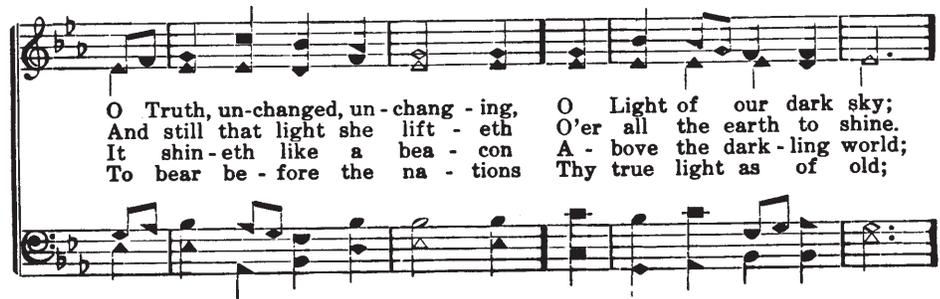
MUNICH 7. 6. 7. 6. D.

MEININGEN, 1693

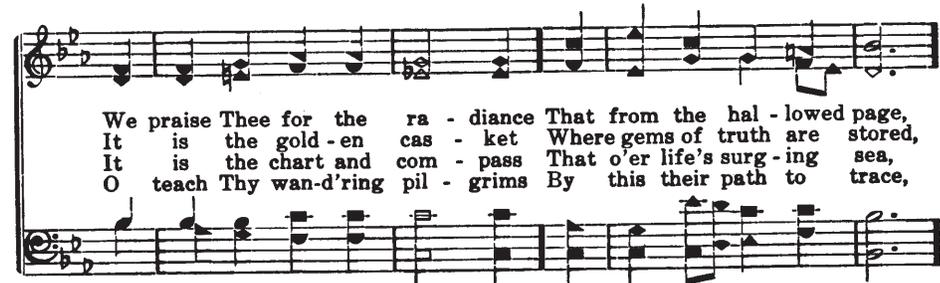
Har. by FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY



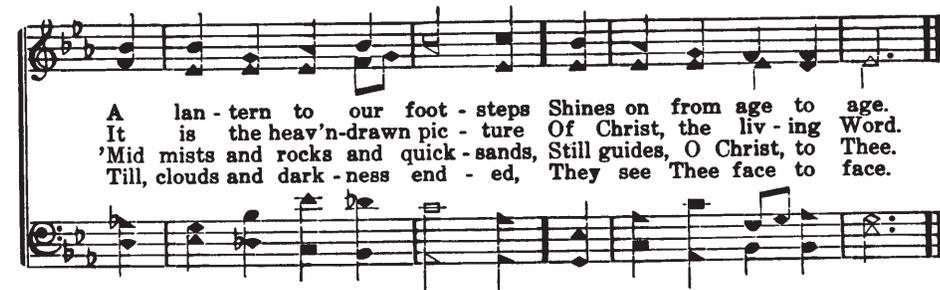
1. O Word of God in - car - nate, O Wis - dom from on high,  
2. The Church from her dear Mas - ter Re - ceived the gift di - vine,  
3. It float - eth like a ban - ner Be - fore God's host un - furled;  
4. O make Thy Church, dear Sav - iour, A lamp of pu - rest gold,



O Truth, un - changed, un - chang - ing, O Light of our dark sky;  
And still that light she lift - eth O'er all the earth to shine.  
It shin - eth like a bea - con A - bove the dark - ling world;  
To bear be - fore the na - tions Thy true light as of old;



We praise Thee for the ra - diance That from the hal - lowed page,  
It is the gold - en cas - ket Where gems of truth are stored,  
It is the chart and com - pass That o'er life's surg - ing sea,  
O teach Thy wan - d'ring pil - grims By this their path to trace,



A lan - tern to our foot - steps Shines on from age to age.  
It is the heav'n - drawn pic - ture Of Christ, the liv - ing Word.  
'Mid mists and rocks and quick - sands, Still guides, O Christ, to Thee.  
Till, clouds and dark - ness end - ed, They see Thee face to face.

his great oratorio, *Elijah*.<sup>3</sup> This work was actually Mendelssohn's last major project, as he died the following year. ■

## Endnotes

1. Johnson, 287
2. *Ibid*, 141.
3. [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org).



## 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 expositional 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.*

# Achan— How Sin Lost a Battle

by Clarence E. Macartney

*“Behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it”*  
(Joshua 7:21).

The only trouble was that he had not dug the hole deep enough. That is always the trouble with sin—you cannot dig a hole deep enough to hide it.

Midnight over the ruins of Jericho. No death-dealing blockbuster had fallen on the city. No artillery had blasted its walls. Yet there it lay, a heap of desolation and ruin. The moon looks down upon the fragments of gigantic walls, prostrate pillars of the temples of Baal, the dust and rubble of baths, theaters, shops, mansions of the rich, and cottages of the poor.

For seven successive days the army of Joshua had marched around the walls of Jericho, carrying with them the Ark of the Covenant, and the priests blowing on the rams’ horns. On the seventh day the army marched seven times around the walls of the city. When the seventh circle was completed the people gave a great shout, and the immense walls of the city fell flat, burying in their collapse the shops and temples and bazaars and homes of the people. Of all the inhabitants only one household survived the catastrophe. That one was Rahab the harlot’s, who had hid the spies of Israel from their enemies. When the army of Joshua marched into the fallen city, Rahab was spared, for, in obedience to the instructions of the spies, she had

hung the scarlet thread from her window.

Outside the broken walls of the city the army of Israel lies encamped. The tents of each tribe are pitched around the tribal standard, and in the midst of the camp are the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle. In the ruins of Jericho not a soul is alive. In the camp of Israel no one is stirring. All are asleep, all but one. Look! Out of yonder tent comes a solitary man. He stands for a little at the fly of his tent and looks this way and that way to see if anyone is looking. Then, cautiously and carefully, stopping every now and then to look back and make sure that he is unobserved, he makes his way out of the camp of Israel and enters the ruins of Jericho.

There he crouches for a time behind the fragment of a fallen wall, as if fearful of the shadow which his body casts in the moonlight. Now he steps over a column of the temple of Baal and carefully makes his way over the heaps of debris until he reaches the street where the shops had once flourished. There he begins to search amid the ruins. In the moonlight he sees something bright and white shining before him. Reaching down, he finds that it is two hundred shekels of silver. He fills both hands with the silver, and then, opening his fingers, lets the silver flow through his hands like a

stream. Once, twice, thrice, he does that, and the sound of the silver falling on silver is music to his covetous soul.

A little farther along he comes upon a wedge of purest gold. Still farther he sees something flashing like fire on the ground. Reaching down he lays hold of the precious stone and finds that it is an ornament on a goodly Babylonian garment. "Better luck than I had expected," he says to himself as he fills his soldier's haversack with the silver, the gold, and the Babylonian garment. Now he cautiously retraces his steps and, leaving the silent and ruined city behind him, enters again the camp of Israel. When he reaches his own tent he pauses and hesitates for a moment, and listens to hear if anyone is stirring in the camp. No one is awake. In the tents of his family all are sound asleep. Then, entering his own tent, and taking the spade that every Israelite carried with him on the march, he digs a hole in the ground at the back of the tent. Into this hole he deposits, first, the Babylonian garment, then the wedge of gold, and then the silver. With his spade he shovels the earth back into the hole, smooths it over, unrolls his mattress over the spot, and lies down to sleep, congratulating himself on the secrecy and great success of his nocturnal expedition. He had brought back with him two hundred shekels of silver, a wedge of gold, and a lordly Babylonian garment, and no eye had seen him! No; no eye but one—the all-seeing eye of God.

Early the next morning, as the mists are lifting on the River Jordan and the Dead Sea to the south, the trumpets begin to speak in the camp of Israel. Three thousand picked soldiers, chosen from all the tribes, obey the voice of the trumpets and, falling in line, march out against the stronghold of Ai, the next fortress in the path of Israel. After the easy victory over mighty Jericho, the capture of Ai was a foregone conclusion. But in the battle which followed, Israel was defeated. Some of the three thousand men were slain, the rest, turning their backs on the enemy, fled in terror to the camp.

Joshua was greatly shaken. It was not the mere repulse before the walls of Ai, in

itself an insignificant matter, but that the army of Israel had fled before the heathen. In his distress Joshua fell on his face before God, and with him the elders of Israel, with dust on their heads. "Why," asked Joshua of God, "have you brought the people over the Jordan, to deliver them into the hands of the Amorites? It would have been better if they had remained on the other side of Jordan." He feared that the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land, hearing of the defeat at Ai, would gather their armies to annihilate the people of Israel.

To this prayer and complaint of Joshua God made a quick answer. He said, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" This is one of those times when God told a man to stop praying. At the passage of the Red Sea He told Moses to stop praying, and to speak to the children of Israel that they should go forward. Here He tells Joshua to cease from his complaints and supplications and go into action. He said to Joshua: "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you."

At the fall of Jericho the command was given the people that no one was to take of the accursed thing of the spoil of the city, but that all the silver and gold and vessels of brass and iron were to be brought into the treasury of the Lord and consecrated to the Lord. It was this commandment that some soldier from the camp of Judah had broken on his nocturnal entry into the city. The next morning, in obedience to God, Joshua assembled the army and the whole people of Israel, and told them that the reason for their defeat before the walls of Ai was that one of their number had sinned against God by taking of the "accursed thing." To discover who this was, the lot

was cast for each tribe and family and household. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Gad, Asher, Benjamin, and all the other tribes passed by and submitted to the lot. But all of them were found innocent. Then came the tribe of Judah. In it family after family was found innocent; household after household; until the lot fell upon Achan. Here was the guilty man!

Joshua called Achan forth before the people and said to him, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." Achan then made full confession of his sin, saying, "I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel." He told Joshua how he had seen among the spoils the Babylonish garment, the shekels of silver, and the wedge of gold; how he coveted them and took them, and hid them in the earth in the midst of his tent.

To verify the confession, Joshua sent messengers to search his tent, and there, as Achan had told him, they found the silver and the gold and the garment. Bringing them out, they laid them on the ground before the people. In solemn procession Joshua then led Achan and his family, with his livestock, his tent, and the stolen and "accursed thing" into the valley of Achor. There he said to Achan, "Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day." And all Israel stoned him. Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, to be a perpetual remembrance of his transgression and of the judgment of God that fell upon him.

This dramatic story from the Book of Joshua tells us several timeless truths about sin: First, how sin gets its start, the progress of sin in the heart, and what it leads to, and how the end of it is death; second, how sin finds the sinner out; and third, how one man's secret sin affects others and hinders the cause of God in the world.

### ***The Beginning and Progress of Sin***

In the confession that he made to Joshua, Achan gave the true history of the beginning and progress of sin. What he said was

this: "I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, . . . then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent." First he *saw*, then he *coveted*, then he *took*, then he *hid*, then he *suffered*. That is the natural history of sin. The man and woman, at the very beginning of the world's history, saw that the fruit of the tree was pleasant to the eyes and good for food and to be desired to make one wise, and they coveted it, and took, and ate, and then sought in vain to hide themselves from God amid the trees of the Garden. Ahab, driving one evening in his chariot to Jezreel, saw the pleasant, well-kept vineyard of Naboth, and coveted it, and took it, after he had slain Naboth. And one day, in that very spot, as Elijah had warned him, "where dogs licked the blood of Naboth," there the dogs licked the blood of Ahab. Samson went down to Sorek and saw a beautiful woman, Delilah, and he coveted, and took, and so betrayed his strength to the Philistines, who put out his eyes and made him grind like a beast in the mill. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, saw the glitter of the gold and silver, and the rich raiment that Naaman the leper had brought from Syria as a gift for the prophet when he healed him, but which Elisha had refused; and he saw, and coveted, and took, and hid them in his tent, like Achan, and lied, and went out from the presence of Elisha a leper as white as snow. Judas saw the glitter of the silver in the hands of the priests and Pharisees, and sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver, and then went out and hanged himself. That is always the natural progress and history of sin. So James put it long ago: "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." The time to resist sin is when it first displays itself and flashes its false attractiveness before us. If it is not resisted then, the next step is to covet, and then to take, and then to seek in vain to hide what has been done.

### ***How Sin Finds the Sinner Out***

The sin of Achan had all the appearance of a perfect sin, a perfect crime, so far as discovery or apprehension was concerned. It was done in the dead of the night. In the ruins of Jericho there was none who could see, for all were dead. The man who had worn the costly Babylonish garment was dead. The hands that had handled the wedge of gold were forever still. The man who had owned the silver was dead. None of the owners of these things saw the theft. In the camp of Israel, when Achan hid the spoil beneath the ground in his tent, there was none who saw him. None of the camp of the Tribe of Judah, none of the family of Zerah, or the house of Zabdi, to which he belonged. The members of his own family had not stirred when he dug the hole and put the loot into it. When he had smoothed over the ground where it was hid, the ground looked just like the ground everywhere else. Yes, it was a perfect crime. And yet his sin found him out, exposed him, judged him, punished him.

Sin always finds the sinner out: in time, in conscience, of eternity. It finds him out in time. The constitution of the world is moral, and all nature seems to be attuned to the moral law. The proverbs of the nations attest to the universal belief that even in this world sin finds men out in exposure and punishment. When Moses saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, he "looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand." But the next day, when he saw two Israelites fighting with one another, and sought to separate them, one of them said to him: "Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known." Yes, there is always someone who is looking.

John Donne, onetime secretary and diplomat, gifted poet, and at length a celebrated preacher and dean of St. Paul's, had his first living at Keyston. Walking one day into the churchyard he saw the sexton digging a grave. At length he threw up a skull with his spade. Donne picked it up in his hands and examined it. In the skull, stick-

ing in the temple, he saw a headless nail, which he secretly drew out, and wrapped in the corner of his handkerchief. Then he asked the gravedigger if he knew whose skull it was. The gravedigger said he did. It had been a man who kept a rum shop, a drunken, dissipated fellow who one morning was found dead in bed after he had taken two quarts of liquor the night before. "Had he a wife?" Donne asked.

"Yes."

"Is she living?"

"Yes."

"What character does she bear?"

"A very good one; only her neighbors reflect on her because she married the day after her husband was buried."

Sometime afterward, in the course of his pastoral visits, Donne called on this woman. He asked her a number of questions, among others, what sickness her husband died of. She told him about his having taken the two quarts of liquor and how he was found dead in bed the next morning. Whereupon Donne opened his handkerchief and, holding up the nail before the woman, said, "Woman, do you know this nail?" The woman instantly acknowledged the crime, and in due season was punished for it.

Sin finds men out in conscience. After all others have lost the trail of an evil deed, and given up the search for the evildoer, conscience takes up its own inexorable search and inflicts its own inescapable judgment.

If it were done when 'tis done!

But that is just the trouble with sin—it is never done.

The reaction of conscience may be immediate, as in the case of Judas, when he flung down the blood money before the priests and said, "I have sinned." As in the case of Peter, who, when Jesus looked upon him after he had denied Him that night in the court of Caiaphas, went out and wept bitterly. But sometimes the reaction and punishment of conscience may be long deferred, as it was in the case of the brethren of Joseph, when long years after they had sold him as a slave into Egypt, and they had come down to buy corn

in Egypt, and Joseph demanded that one of them be left as a hostage until they brought down their youngest brother, the conscience-smitten men said to one another: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Conscience may sleep in prosperity, only to awaken in the storm of adversity.

Though no mortal ere accused you,  
Though no witness ere confused you,  
Though the darkness came and fell  
Over even deeds of hell,  
Still your secret sin will find you  
Pass before your eyes to blind you,  
Burn your heart with hidden shame,  
Scar your cheek with guilty flame.

#### ***How Sin Hurts and Hinders Others***

Sin is always individual in its origin, but always social, as well as individual, in its results. No man lives to himself, and no man sins to himself. Here was a secret sin if ever there was one. None of all the army and camp of Israel had seen it, and yet its effect upon Israel was disastrous. When they went out to battle against Ai they fled before the enemy. And the reason, God told Joshua, was because of the sin of one man. That sin brought defeat to his country on the field of battle. It brought disgrace and ruin to his family. It brought doom and ruin to himself.

Who can tell how much the work and battle of the church is held up and hindered because of Achans in the camp? How solemn that makes the responsibility of every soldier in the ranks of the army of the Lord, of every professed follower of Christ in the church! To whatever degree you are unworthy or un-Christlike in spirit, in word, or in deed, to that extent you hinder the work of the church and hold up the progress of the army of the Lord.

Not only does a single sin, even the most secret sin, affect and influence other lives, but it goes on, year after year, sometimes age after age, doing its malignant work. That is the meaning of that monotonous refrain that you hear echoing in the Old

Testament, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Long after Jeroboam was dead, the sin which he had committed, when he put up his golden calves for idols, and so led Israel into idolatry, haunted and injured the nation.

A man once went into a jewelry shop in Paris to purchase a ring. The jeweler brought out a tray of rings for him to inspect and from which to make his selection. As he was looking them over, the jeweler showed him, as a curiosity, a medieval ring of the finest gold and workmanship, and so fabricated that on the inside of the band there was a tiny claw of a lion, but so cut that it did not irritate the finger when the ring was first put on. The man slipped the ring on his finger, made some comment about it, and then handed it back to the jeweler. When he had purchased a ring for himself he returned to his home. That night he felt a numbness in his hand, and then in his arm, and at length his whole side seemed to be paralyzed. A physician was summoned, and, after examining the man, said to him that he had all the symptoms of poisoning. But the man could think of no way in which he had been poisoned. Then the physician discovered a slight scratch on the finger of the paralyzed hand, and the man remembered the medieval ring that he had seen that day at the jeweler's and had slipped on his finger. This was one of the rings that the cruel heads of the Italian states of that age made use of when they wished to get rid of an enemy. In the tiny claw of a lion was a duct which was filled with the most deadly poison. The ring would be presented to the victim as a gift. Sometime afterward the one who had given him the ring would salute him in a friendly fashion, and, taking his hand, would press it in a way that drove the tiny claw of a lion into the skin and thus injected the poison. In a short time the man would die. Thus four hundred years after the ring had been made it still had the power to kill. So it is with sin. That is one of the things which helps us to understand why it is that nothing less than the precious blood of Christ can atone for sin and wash out its stain.

Great as was the sin of Achan, and tragic

its effect and influence upon others, and inescapable though his judgment was, Achan made a full confession of his sin. That is the only compensation that the sinner can ever render to God. If anyone has made himself an enemy of his own soul, of his family, of his church, of his community, by his transgression, the one good thing that he can do is to repent and confess his

sin. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Achan was stoned; but Christ was beaten, crucified on our behalf, that through His death we might have life eternal. ■

—Taken from *Sermons on Bible Characters*



## The Family: Together in God's Presence

by John and Noel Piper

God-centered worship is supremely important in the life of our church. We approach the Sunday morning worship hour with great seriousness and earnestness and expectancy. We try to banish all that is flip-pant or trivial or chatty.

Not all services are this way. Sunday morning is the Mount of Transfiguration—the awesome place of glory and speechlessness. Sunday or Wednesday evening is the Mount of Olives—the familiar spot for conversation with the Lord and each other.

In this article, we hope to do two things: 1) demonstrate that parents (or some responsible adult) should bring little children to the Sunday morning worship service rather than send them to a "children's church"; 2) give some practical advice about how to do it.

We don't claim that our way of worshiping is the only valid way. Not all our ideas may fit with the way another church does it.

For example, we don't have a children's sermon as part of our Sunday morning service. It would be fun for the children, but in the long run would weaken the spiritual intensity of our worship. To everything there is a season. And we believe that, for at least one hour a week, we should sustain a maximum intensity of moving reverence.

### ***The Biggest Stumbling Block***

There are several reasons why we urge parents to bring their children to worship. But these arguments will not carry much weight with parents who do not love to worship God.

The greatest stumbling block for children in worship is that their parents do not cherish the hour. Children can feel the difference between duty and delight. Therefore, the first and most important job of a parent is to fall in love with the worship of God. You can't impart what you don't possess.

### ***Togetherness***

Worshiping together counters the contemporary fragmentation of families. Hectic American life leaves little time for significant togetherness. It is hard to overestimate the good influence of families doing valuable things together week in and week out, year in and year out.

Worship is the most valuable thing a human can do. The cumulative effect of 650 worship services spent with Mom and Dad between the ages of 4 and 17 is incalculable.

### ***Catch the Spirit***

Parents have the responsibility to teach their children by their own example the meaning and value of worship. Therefore,

parents should want their children with them in worship so the children can catch the spirit and form of their parents' worship.

Children should see how Mom and Dad bow their heads in earnest prayer during the prelude and other non-directed times. They should see how Mom and Dad sing praise to God with joy in their faces, and how they listen hungrily to His Word. They should catch the spirit of their parents meeting the living God.

Something seems wrong when parents want to take their children in the formative years and put them with other children and other adults to form their attitude and behavior in worship. Parents should be jealous to model for their children the tremendous value they put on reverence in the presence of Almighty God.

### ***Not an Excessive Expectation***

To sit still and be quiet for an hour or two on Sunday is not an excessive expectation for a healthy six-year-old who has been taught to obey his parents. It requires a measure of discipline, but that is precisely what we want to encourage parents to impart to their children in the first five years.

Thus the desire to have children in the worship service is part of a broader concern that children be reared so that they are "submissive and respectful in every way" (1 Timothy 3:4).

Children can be taught in the first five years of life to obey their father and mother when they say, "Sit still and be quiet." Parents' helplessness to control their children should not be solved by alternative services but by a renewal of discipline in the home.

### ***Not Everything Goes Over Their Heads***

Children absorb a tremendous amount that is of value. And this is true even if they say they are bored.

Music and words become familiar. The message of the music starts to sink in. The form of the service comes to feel natural. The choir makes a special impression with a kind of music the children may hear at no other time. Even if most of the sermon goes over

their heads, experience shows that children hear and remember remarkable things.

The content of the prayers and songs and sermon gives parents unparalleled opportunities to teach their children the great truths of our faith. If parents would only learn to query their children after the service and then explain things, the children's capacity to participate would soar.

Not everything children experience has to be put on their level in order to do them good. Some things must be. But not everything.

For example, to learn a new language you can go step by step from alphabet to vocabulary to grammar to syntax. Or you can take a course where you dive in over your head, and all you hear is the language you don't know. Most language teachers would agree that the latter is by far the most effective.

Sunday worship service is not useless to children just because much of it goes over their heads. They can and will grow into this new language faster than we think—if positive and happy attitudes are fostered by the parents.

### ***A Sense of Awe***

There is a sense of solemnity and awe which children should experience in the presence of God. This is not likely to happen in children's church. Is there such a thing as children's thunder or children's lightning or the crashing of the sea "for children"?

A deep sense of the unknown and the mysterious can rise in the soul of a sensitive child in solemn worship—if his parents are going hard after God themselves. A deep moving of the magnificence of God can come to the young, tender heart through certain moments of great hymns or "loud silence" or authoritative preaching. These are of immeasurable value in the cultivation of a heart that fears and loves God.

We do not believe that children who have been in children's church for several years between the ages of 6 and 12 will be more inclined or better trained to enjoy worship than if they had spent those years at the side of their parents. In fact, the opposite is probably the case.

It will probably be harder to acclimate a 10- or 12-year-old to a new worship service than a 5- or 6-year-old. The cement is much less wet, and vast possibilities of shaping the impulses of the heart are gone.

***SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS  
FROM NOEL***

When our four sons grew to be young men, we assumed that the worship-training chapter of our life had ended. But God has wonderful surprises. Our youngest son was 12 when we adopted our daughter, who was just a couple of months old. So our experience with young children in the pew started more than twenty years ago and will continue a while longer.

***Getting Started Step by Step***

We discovered that the very earliest “school” for worship is in the home—when we help a baby be quiet for just a moment while we ask God’s blessing on our meal; when a toddler is sitting still to listen to a Bible story book; when a child is learning to pay attention to God’s Word and to pray during family devotional times.

At church, even while our children were still nursery-aged, I began to help them take steps toward eventual regular attendance in Sunday morning worship service. I used other gatherings as a training ground—baptisms, choir concerts, missionary videos, or other special events that would grab the attention of a 3-year-old. I’d “promote” these to the child as something exciting and grown-up. The occasional special attendance gradually developed into regular evening attendance, while at the same time we were beginning to attempt Sunday mornings more and more regularly.

I’ve chosen not to use the church’s child care as an escape route when the service becomes long or the child gets restless. I don’t want to communicate that you go to a service as long as it seems interesting, and then you can go play. And I wanted to avoid a pattern that might reinforce the idea that all of the service is good, up until the preaching of God’s Word—then you can leave.

Of course, there are times when a child gets restless or noisy, despite a parent’s best efforts. I pray for the understanding of the people around me, and try to deal with the problem unobtrusively. But if the child won’t be quiet or still, I take him or her out—for the sake of quick discipline and for the sake of the other worshipers. Then I have to decide whether we’ll slip back into the service or stay in the area reserved for parents with young children. It depends on how responsive the child seems and whether there’s an appropriate moment in the flow of the service. If we stay in the “family area” outside the sanctuary, I help my child sit quietly as if we were still in the sanctuary.

By the time they are four years old, our children assume that they’ll be at all the regular weekly services with us.

***Preparation All Week Long***

Your anticipation and conversation before and after service and during the week will be important in helping your child learn to love worship and to behave well in the service.

Help your children become acquainted with your pastor. Let them shake hands with him at the door and be greeted by him. Talk about who the worship leaders are; call them by name. Suggest that your child’s Sunday school teacher invite the pastor to spend a few minutes with the children if your church’s Sunday morning schedule allows for that.

If you know what the Scripture passage will be for the coming Sunday, read it together several times during the week. A little one’s face really lights up when he hears familiar words from the pulpit.

Talk about what is “special” this week: a trumpet solo, a friend singing, a missionary speaker from a country you have been praying for.

Sometimes you can take the regular elements of the service and make them part of the anticipation. “We’ve been reading about Joseph. What do you think the pastor will say about him?” “What might the choir be singing this morning?” “Maybe we can sit next to our handicapped friend and help

him with his hymnbook so he can worship better too.”

There are two additional and important pre-service preparations for us: a pen and notepad for “Sunday notes” and a trip to the restroom (leaving the service is highly discouraged).

### ***What Happens During Service?***

First, I let a child who wants a worship folder have one—it helps a child feel like a participant in the service. And quietly, before service begins, I may point to the different parts of the service listed in the folder.

During service, we all sit or stand along with the rest of the congregation. I share my Bible or hymnal or worship folder with my little one, because use of these is an important part of the service.

The beginning of the sermon is the signal for “notetaking” to begin. (I want a child’s activities to be related to the service. So we don’t bring library books to read. I do let a very young child look at pictures in his Bible, if he can do it quietly.) Notetaking doesn’t mean just scribbling, but “taking notes” on a special pad used just for the service.

“Taking notes” grows up as the child does. At first he draws pictures of what he hears in the sermon. Individual words or names trigger individual pictures. You might pick out a word that will be used frequently in the sermon; have the child listen carefully and make a check mark in his “notes” each time he hears the word.

Later he may want to copy letters or words from the Scripture passage for the morning. When spelling comes easier, he will write words and then phrases he hears in the sermon. Before you might expect it, he will probably be outlining the sermon and noting whole concepts.

### ***Goals and Requirements***

My training for worship has three main goals:

1. The children learn early and as well as they can to worship God heartily.
2. That parents be able to worship.
3. That families cause no distraction to the

people around them.

So there are certain expectations that I teach the young ones and expect of the older ones:

- Sit or stand or close eyes when the service calls for it.
- Sit up straight and still—not lounging or fidgeting or crawling around, but respectful toward God and the worshipers around you.
- Keep bulletin papers and Bible and hymnal pages as quiet as possible.
- Stay awake. Taking notes helps. (I did allow the smallest ones to sleep, but they usually didn’t need to!)
- Look toward the worship leaders in the front. No people-gazing or clock-watching.
- If you can read fast enough, sing along with the printed words. At least keep your eyes on the words and try to think them. If you can’t read yet, listen very hard.

### ***Creating an Environment in the Pew***

For my part, I try to create an environment in our pew that makes worship easier. In past years, I would sit between whichever two were having the most trouble with each other that day. We choose seats where we can see the front better (while seated, not kneeling on the pew; kneeling leads to squirming and blocks the view of others).

Each child has a Bible, offering money, and worship folder at hand, so he doesn’t have to scramble and dig during the worship time. During the prelude, if I notice in the bulletin something unusual for which we need to be prepared (a responsive reading or congregational prayers, for example), I quietly point it out to a child who is old enough to participate.

### ***Afterward***

When the service has ended, my first words are praise to the child who has behaved well. In addition to the praise, I might also mention one or two things that we both hope will be better next time.

But what if there has been disregard of our established expectations and little attempt to behave? The first thing that happens following the service is a silent and immediate trip

to the most private place we can find. Then the deserved words are spoken and consequences administered or promised.

#### ***Closeness and Warmth***

On the rare occasions when my pastor-husband can sit with the rest of us, the youngest one climbs right into his lap—and is more attentive and still than usual. What a wonderful thing for a young mind to closely associate the closeness and warmth of a parent's lap with special God-times.

A child gets almost the same feeling from being next to his parent or from an arm around the shoulder or an affectionate hand on the knee.

The setting of the tight family circle focusing toward God will be a nonverbal picture growing richer and richer in the child's mind and heart as he matures in appreciation for his family and in awe at the greatness of God. ■

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## **Counseling From the Word**

### **Effective Counsel for Christians Tempted by Homosexuality**

by John Street

Heath, after becoming a Christian, has come out of a full-blown homosexual lifestyle. He senses the weaknesses of his habituated body and the sinful tendencies of his heart and thought-life. But he insists that he desperately wants to be freed from their control and domination. Furthermore, he believes that Jesus Christ is the solution to his battle and the misery it has engendered, but he's having trouble making the connection between his newfound faith and biblical solutions that will bring substantive and lasting change. Of grave concern is that Heath married a Christian wife not long after his conversion. His desperation pictures a drowning man barely clinging to an ocean dock; the currents of desire trying to pull him away are strong.

A second man, Fernando, is single and

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very effeminate; many people at church assume he's a homosexual because of his feminine-like mannerisms. Just the way he dresses, walks, and talks is noticeably different from the other men at church. It is unmistakable that his closest friends are the single young ladies in the college and career group, although he has never expressed romantic interest toward any one of them. Even though the topics of his conversations are more feminine than masculine (clothes, style, haircuts, etc.), he has never confessed any homosexual tendencies to anyone. Yet the evidence seems to be convincing. What makes matters worse is that he seems closed to discussing this issue with anyone.

Then there is a single middle-aged woman, Lucy, who was supposedly converted after two decades of many lesbian relationships. She has become very active in the women's ministry and Bible studies in her church. Lucy was never married and openly acknowledges that from the time she was a little girl she has never liked men.

Her husky appearance is unmistakably masculine, including a very short hairstyle. In recent years Lucy had been a semi driver for a local freight company. She proudly asserts, "I can do anything a man can do!" One of the pastor's wives has even been concerned about Lucy's interest in establishing a close relationship with her under the pretense of discipleship.

Cases like Heath, Fernando, and Lucy are becoming more prevalent in the church.<sup>1</sup> Increasingly, experienced pastors and biblical counselors are seeking guidance in counseling Christians plagued with homosexual and lesbian desires that are "against nature."<sup>2</sup> Since the understandable restrictions and purposes of this article limit in-depth discussion of this subject, my purpose is to provide some brief descriptive parameters for counseling Christians who are struggling with this problem, hoping that it will "prime the pump" for further exegetical and counseling thought in the future.

You should note that I use the descriptive "Christian" with qualification. I fully understand that a person who IS a homosexual (lesbian) or effeminate<sup>3</sup> IS NOT a Christian no matter how passionate his or her claim.<sup>4</sup> This is the reason that the gospel must be the central discussion early in counseling. Unbelievers cannot be counseled; they can only be evangelized. Why? They do not live under the same biblical authority. At best, the Bible is a set of suggestions for unbelievers. Even still, their souls are dead; they have unresponsive hearts when it comes to the truth of the Spirit, and they are hostile to His claims.<sup>5</sup> Many well-meaning counselors have stumbled here, trying to provide biblical counsel

to homosexuals who were incapable of spiritual response. This only leads to discouragement and frustration on the part of both counselor and counselee.

In all three of these case scenarios the counsees claim to be Christian. As a counselor I am fairly confident that Heath is a believer because he understands the gospel, and his desire to change is so strong. This is evidenced by his deep remorse and repentance over his sin. He is responsive to biblical teaching and admonition. Fernando's problem is more complicated. I have seen cases where some men were effeminate-acting heterosexuals that needed counsel on how to be more masculine in leadership, attitude, and action.<sup>6</sup> They were open to some loving confrontation on how to act more masculine. But if Fernando persists in being unresponsive to biblical counsel, there is reason to doubt that he possesses the teachable spirit that accompanies salvation. He is not compelled by the truth because there is nothing in his heart that resonates with it.

Then there is the sad case of Lucy. Once you understand her past, as well as her attitude and actions with the other women at church, there is good reason to believe she is not a Christian. What is the difference with her case? It is her total disregard for biblical instruction and avoidance of God-appointed masculine leadership in the church. As an undershepherd of God's flock, I would be concerned that Lucy is a predatory female who has found God's flock to be unsuspecting prey for her illicit appetite. She has found that Christians relax their discernment when another merely claims to be one of them. In fact, many will actually take up her defense if anyone questions the

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1. Romans 1:26, 27

2. Romans 1:26, "para phusin," "contrary to nature"; in contrast see Romans 11:21, "kata phusin," according to nature.

3. 1 Corinthians 6:9, "malakoi," often used as a technical term in the first century, referring to male prostitutes who assume the role of the female, hence effeminate.

4. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, such people in verse 9 are labeled "the unrighteous" and have not been "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

5. Ephesians 2:1, 5 (see also Romans 3:10-18).

6. Study Jesus Christ and His masculinity. Carefully counsel the role of man's leadership in the home and church as a provider and protector (Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:8; Titus 1:5-9; 2:2, 6-8; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

genuineness of her faith. And yet, the warning of our Lord is clear.

*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'*<sup>7</sup>

Lucy has a rebel's spirit. Some guilt-ridden homosexuals and lesbians have taken refuge in the church in order to salve their consciences.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, in spite of their stumbling intentions to feel better, their strong desires are still dominated by depravity, and they proceed to practice their lust among God's people. Women like Lucy often prey on Christian women who have unhappy marital relationships. She understands how a woman thinks and will often begin by being a strong but caring listening ear under the pretense of spiritual concern. Bible studies frequently turn into lengthy discussions on personal issues (something the husband often will not do with his wife). In a case like hers the church needs protection, and Lucy needs Christ. Like the "false teachers" mentioned by Peter who entice Christians to follow their "sensuality," Lucy is full of sensual greed in her attempt to exploit the unhappy women of the church.<sup>9</sup>

If Lucy is willing to surrender her life to the Lord Jesus Christ and become accountable to church leadership, she will find that biblical obedience with the enablement of the Holy Spirit can bring real and lasting change. If you are as sure as you reasonably can be with the genuineness of your counselee's profession of faith in Christ, then serious counseling can begin to make quick changes.

### ***Counseling Strategy***

After you are confident that your coun-

7. *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Mt. 7:21-23.

8. Romans 2:15.

9. 2 Peter 2:1-10, see how in context this reference refers to Sodom and Gomorrah.

10. Psalm 5:4; 92:15; Isaiah 46:9-10.

11. 1 Samuel 16:7; Luke 19:3.

seelee has the same type of desire as Heath to change and be obedient to Christ, then it would be fruitful to take a careful inventory of his lifestyle and habits of thought. Frequently homosexuals grew up in a home with one or a combination of the following circumstances: parental irresponsibility, molestation, absence of proper biblical roles of husband and wife, and either a total lack of religious upbringing or a very harsh, demanding, even legalistic upbringing.

Careful data gathering with your counselee who is tempted by the desires or even lifestyle of homosexuality will greatly affect the direction of your counsel. Understanding the personal history of your counselee is imperative if you are going to dig out dominating and sinful motivations, thoughts, and desires. For example, as Fernando was growing up, he was small in stature. He was often ostracized by the boys; even though he tried very hard to be accepted, they excluded him from their games. From his earliest memories he reluctantly gravitated to the girls and learned to resign himself to an effeminate lifestyle. His thoughts were full of anger toward God for making him that way, and in counseling he eventually revealed that he would purposefully exaggerate his feminine mannerisms out of spite, especially at church and around Christians. He had to repent of his deep-settled anger toward God and acknowledge that God had not made a mistake by making him the way He did.<sup>10</sup> There were some great men in the Bible who were small in stature.<sup>11</sup> Through counseling he learned that at an early age when his desire for acceptance among other young men was rebuffed, something he greatly coveted, his craving inverted and he rejected the guys.

Here are some helpful principles when counseling the Christian who is tempted by homosexuality:

### **1. Identity must be formed “in Christ.”<sup>12</sup>**

The theological understanding of the Christian being “in Christ” is critical for those who struggle with homosexuality. Sometimes, early in counseling, the counselee will announce to the counselor, “I am a homosexual.” He has become convinced by his own fruitless struggle with his sexual weaknesses or by the world’s relentless drumbeat that he is genetically hardwired this way and cannot change.<sup>13</sup> Of course, this is a cultural lie that robs the counselee of hope.

Who he is “in Christ” must be the planet around which all his thoughts and actions revolve. This is more than just a play on words; it has to do with how a Christian views himself—as an undeserving sinner who enjoys the gracious provisions and righteousness of Christ in order to have full acceptance with God the Father. When his thought-life is practiced “in Christ,” it brings hope and change to thoughts, desires, and behaviors. He thinks, desires, and acts in new ways, abandoning homosexual and effeminate dress, words, and mannerisms. It is especially effective to faithfully teach the principles of Romans 6:1-14 while recalling the earlier context of Romans 1:24-27. How a Christian views himself and his position in Christ will greatly affect his change and growth in sanctification. A Christian tempted by homosexual (or lesbian) desires is not a homosexual; he is a Christian! This thought and all of its theological richness is vital to understand if your counselee is going to possess the perseverance to defeat this foe.

### **2. Confession must include the condition as well as behavior of homosexuality.**

Change begins when a person sees the problem as God sees it. This is when his spiritual perception can honestly identify

aspects of the inner and outer man in sin. It is when he realizes that his life is an affront to God’s holiness, and he is crushed and broken because of it.<sup>14</sup> There are many who believe and teach that the behavior of homosexuality is sinful, but the condition is not. This was crafted by some Christians who try to minister to homosexuals as an attempt to appease many who are more psychologically persuaded on the one hand, with a misguided acceptance of the “condition” of homosexuality. When someone has a “condition” (chemical or genetic predisposition), no one can do anything about it other than learn to accept it as a part of who he is. Yet they go on to say that the practice of homosexuality is the sinful element that needs confession and forgiveness. So as long as he has the condition (if he accepts genetic determinism, it will be for a lifetime) and does not practice homosexuality, he’ll be fine. But there is no such distinction made in Scripture. In fact, this smacks of contemporary Phariseeism. The Pharisees believed that as long as they did not actually commit adultery they were fine, but Jesus rebuked that idea and said that a man who lusts in his heart is already an adulterer.<sup>15</sup> God’s view of the problem does not divide the condition from the behavior.

Both the condition and the behavior are “unnatural” and grievously sinful. Like salvation, the only hope for a change in the condition as well as the behavior is Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup> This happens when the counselor and counselee understand that the condition of the body (biological urges) and its behavior (thoughts, longings, and actions) when homosexually oriented is in rebellion against God’s plan and order. At this point the natural response of the regenerate heart is confession of sin to God. By theological definition, confession is the act of

12. This is not the search for self-focused significance and identity that is popularized by Alfred Adler and many “Christian” psychologists. It is the theological identity, a true identity, that is so important to the Apostle Paul (Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 8:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1; etc.).

13. See “Homosexuality in the Ministry,” *Journal of Modern Ministry*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, Fall 2004.

14. Proverbs 28:13; James 4:8-10.

15. Matthew 5:28.

16. Luke 5:32; 1 Corinthians 6:11.

acknowledging that specific thoughts, desires, and deeds are sinful and illegitimate for the Christian. Confession gives it an appropriate label and calls it what God calls it: sin! Repentance is the proof of genuine confession.

### **3. Repentance must involve a complete renunciation of the homosexual lifestyle.**

Christians who have a history of homosexual struggles are in a special category of sin in Scripture. Every Christian struggles with daily sin and the subtle ways it manifests itself in his or her life.<sup>17</sup> These require continual confession and repentance. John Calvin said the Christian life is a race of repentance—not a race to attain repentance, but a race that is characterized by repentance. All Christians practice regular repentance for sins, but the homosexually-tempted Christian has a particular sin that has been persistent and unrelenting for some time. It is possible for some sins like this to overshadow the Christian's life for an extended period. In biblical counseling we call these "life-dominating" sins in order to theologically distinguish them from individual differentiated sins. Life-dominating sins are sins that the Christian continues to commit because he feels powerless to change, even though he knows they are wrong."<sup>18</sup> Jay Adams has defined them well:

*When a man (as a man; a whole person) can be labeled fairly as a drunkard, homosexual, a drug addict, etc., he has a life-dominating problem. He is no longer merely a man, but the Bible speaks of him as a certain kind of man (drunkard; liar; double-minded, etc.); i.e., a man characterized by or dominated by the particular problem that gives him his name. The Bible labels those with life-dominating problems.<sup>19</sup>*

Change necessitates an initial far-reaching repentance for sins that have become life-dominating. Genuine repentance is a change of mind that is so complete that it leads to a change of life.<sup>20</sup> So repentance from life-dominating homosexuality must be so comprehensive that it renounces the entire dominating lifestyle. Every thought, motivational desire, word, habit, and action that has initiated or facilitated homosexuality in his life must be acknowledged before the Lord as sin. This may require more than one counseling appointment to achieve. Then bridges need to be burned in that person's life to make it hard to return to that sin again. If there are friends (even so-called Christians) that encourage this sin, the friendships must end immediately. If it is a co-worker or work environment, then he must change jobs. All pipelines that fuel this sin must be severed. Of course, they must be replaced with friends and thinking that will facilitate righteousness.<sup>21</sup>

Confession and repentance do not end there. Every time and in whatever form this sensual sin raises its head, it must be struck down through confession and repentance. Confessional prayer is a critical tool for the homosexually-enticed Christian.

### **4. Teach God's original model for sexuality.**

Most people who come to Christian counseling for this problem are well aware of the Bible's condemnation of homosexual sin.<sup>22</sup> Only counselees who have been infected with the pseudo-doctrine of liberal theology and Metropolitan Churches (gay and lesbian alliance of churches) and claim that Bible-believing Christians are homophobic struggle with this being a sin.<sup>23</sup> In reality they are "theophobic" (afraid of God). They

17. Romans 7:23-24, the Apostle Paul is speaking of his struggle with sin as a Christian. See in verse 24 the emphatic personal pronoun ("ego") points to a present tense as the Apostle is writing this epistle.

18. Willful or presumptuous sins, Psalm 19:13; 119:133; Romans 6:12-13.

19. Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 206-207.

20. Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8; 2 Corinthians 7:10.

21. Real change occurs only with righteous replacement, Colossians 3:5-11, put off and put on!

22. Genesis 18:20-21; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:18 (dog = Hb. male prostitute); 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

23. They claim the Bible does not teach that homosexual relationships are wrong; only unloving, hurtful or destructive homosexual relationships are wrong.

are driven to re-write the Bible's meaning because of their fear of what God really says. But for most serious Christian counselees who desire to change, I rarely need to rehearse the strong Scriptural prohibitions against homosexuality. However, I would examine the several prohibition passages in depth if I believed the counselee had adopted a cavalier attitude toward God and His Word during the course of counseling.

A far more profitable approach has been careful instruction on God's original design for sexuality. This would include detailed theological instruction on the importance of the gender distinctiveness of Adam and Eve. In Genesis 1:26 there is a distinction made between plural and singular with the Hebrew words that illustrates how the distinctive genders are plural (male and female), reflecting the plurality of the Godhead ("Let Us make man") and yet coming together into an essential unity of persons. God in relationship creates man in relationship, male and female, in perfect unity, bearing His image (singular). Lesbian and homosexual relationships distort and destroy the reflective image of God that mankind in gender complement must have.

Further instruction can be given on the creation mandate to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it."<sup>24</sup> This was not given to two men or two women but to a man and a woman. Without medical procedures of artificial insemination, homosexual or lesbian couples cannot procreate or fulfill God's mandate the way a heterosexual couple can. Again, there is no substitute for a monogamous heterosexual relationship in reflecting God's glorious image.

Identical genders can be close friends, but it is impossible for them to enjoy the depth of companionship that God has created between the idiosyncratic genders. Eve was created as the effective counterpart to Adam in Genesis 2:18. The word *suitable* refers to her being made to correspond to Adam and thereby complement him in every way. Same-gender sex is monotony;

different gender sex is harmonious. God designed the male and female relationship, when living righteously as a husband and wife, for rich companionship. This is something homosexual relationships can never understand, much less appreciate.

There is so much more that could be developed on this topic, but space does not permit. It strikes me how every homosexual and lesbian relationship must borrow from God's original design to survive, because every same-sex relationship has a dominant (male) role and submissive (female) role. Even in their sinful rejection of God's original mandate they tacitly give tribute to the "natural" created design of complementary gender roles.

#### **5. Sex is a matter of worship.**

Any perversion of God's creation order in sexual relationships demonstrates idolatry. All sexual sin comes from a covetous heart. The Apostle Paul warns in Colossians 3:5, "Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed." Each of these terms is directly related to sexual sins. Then he adds, "which amounts to idolatry." In Christ, Christians are dead to these evils, but the warning Paul gives assumes they still struggled with these sins and needed to think rightly about their earthly bodies being freed from them in death. Prior to becoming Christians they were enslaved to sexual sins. Death frees slaves. When they died with Christ, they were freed from the slavery to these sins. To return to them is to return to slavery and the worst type of idolatry.

Christians who surrender to homosexual and lesbian temptations are bowing their hearts to the idol of sexual greed.<sup>25</sup> It is false worship. Therefore it is imperative that they return and worship the true and living Lord. Once this is understood and the right type of worship is restored, a new and vibrant life will return to your counselees. ■

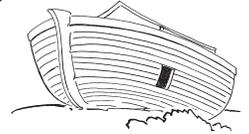
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24. Genesis 1:28.

25. Ephesians 5:3.



## *Beginning Issues*



# **Mechanisms of Evolution: Do They Exist?**

by John Mullett

The evolutionary process is taught to move from the simple to the complex, with the idea that life started with a single-celled simple form of life and gradually given enough time life has evolved to include the many different life-forms we see today. For this process to be possible (true) it needs some mechanism(s) to bring about the arising of new information to add the new features required to bring about the change of one life-form into another. What I want to address in the next two articles, is the question: Does such a mechanism exist?

One of the natural processes that evolutionists champion as a driving force behind the evolutionary process is natural selection. *“Darwin’s claim to fame is the discovery of the ‘mechanism’ of natural selection (the ‘survival of the fittest’).”*<sup>1</sup> But does natural selection help provide a mechanism that evolution needs to generate change from one kind into another? Does it gather and add information that was previously not present at the genetic level?

Natural selection<sup>2</sup> is a process so-called because naturally certain traits that are better suited for a certain environment tend to be preserved or selected for in the population. For example, let’s suppose we observed a population of dogs and found

that without intervention long-haired dogs naturally tended to survive better in cold environments than did short-haired dogs. Thus the population of dogs in that environment over time consisted largely of long-haired dogs. But if the change in population was observed to move from mixed (long and short hair) to predominantly the favored trait (long hair) does this indicate the gathering of new information necessary to lead to a changing of one kind (dog) into another (cat)? No, after the change the animals are still dogs, but with *less* genetic information than they had before, because now they have lost the information for short hair. The information for long hair was not new information added to the genes, but rather it was information that was there all along (perhaps even “latent” or “hidden”) and was simply selected for, not newly generated information. Natural selection can only select for information that is already present and the traits that are not selected for always represent a loss of information.

Man does the same thing with artificial selection<sup>3</sup> in which certain traits in animals and plants are carefully selected for to enhance production, usefulness, and even to eliminate unpleasant traits. In all cases, no matter how advantageous

the traits that emerge, any selection (artificial or natural) is always the singling out of certain traits by the elimination of others. It is information lost instead of new information generated as evolution demands.

Evolutionists frequently accuse creationists of claiming there is no change in organisms. But to the contrary if we build our thinking on the Bible and creation as described in Genesis we should expect to see changes in organisms. With the introduction of death at the fall we should expect things like copying mistakes in our genes (genetic mutations) and unfavorable environments in which survival is difficult (the trigger for natural selection). There will be changes within a kind (e.g. different types of dogs) even to the point where interbreeding

with others of his own kind may become impossible. What has never been observed however is one kind (dog) changing into another kind (cat). ■

#### ENDNOTES

1. 'A New Beginning.' The following is the text of an article written by Tom Bethell in the September issue of *The American Spectator* (pages 16 and 17). The title of the article is "A New Beginning—Darwin Revisionism Goes Mainstream." — Taken from <http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs/1245.asp>.
2. What is natural selection? For an explanation see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural\\_selection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_selection) or see any dictionary.
3. What is artificial selection? For an explanation see <http://www.learner.org/channel/courses/essential/life/session5/closer1.html> or any dictionary.



## What Motivates Our Changes?

by Stephen Russell

Thirty-two years ago just before I turned 21, I joined the Amish Mennonite (Beachy) Church. The biggest reason for this decision was the nonresistant position of the church. I was converted at 17, and from then on, I believed that Christians should not participate in killing others. But I did not find a church that believed as I did until the summer before I joined this church. I was also impressed at the time with what seemed to me a solid commitment to following the teachings of the Bible.

In the 32 years since, I have learned a lot of things. I have come to see our churches in a little different light. This essay is not meant to be highly critical, but rather it is meant as a simple attempt to express how one convert from outside the Mennonite-Amish world has come to evaluate his chosen constituency.

As I mentioned, the solid commitment to a biblical worldview and lifestyle drew me strongly to our fellowship. To this outsider, the Beachy church seemed to be a stable community with clear ideas coming from the Bible to direct everyday life. My own inclination is more strongly rational than emotional, so perhaps that influenced how I first evaluated what I saw and experienced as I moved toward joining the church and then actually became part of it in October, 1974.

It's been quite a while since I joined, so I don't clearly remember when it started, but some time after I joined I began to wonder about certain attitudes that I hadn't noticed or recognized at the beginning.

I think I resisted the evidence for these attitudes because I didn't want to believe they existed in the fellowship I loved and

enjoyed. But over time, I had to recognize that they were indeed present, and even in some cases, predominant in the church:

1. First and probably least destructive was embarrassment about being Amish or plain or different, however you want to express it.
2. There was also a strong discontentment with things as they were.
3. Finally and most destructive of the three, there was a reactionary attitude.

I think these attitudes are all destructive. If they are not repented of, they will almost certainly grow, undermining and eventually destroying a person's commitment to the church. It seems to me they are essentially emotional responses to the church community—its traditions and its values. This is the key point I want to make. Much that has formed and motivated and changed our fellowship over the years has happened because of emotional reactions rather than because of spiritual growth or well-considered evaluation of what effect it will have on the church.

I am not against changes where changes are needed, but often our method of changing our traditions and customs has more to do with intense dislike than with anything in the Bible calling us to change. The danger here is that we will not only change those things which don't matter or things that should be changed, but we will also abandon practices and principles that are clearly scriptural.

As we abandon our own tradition and formative story (that is: our Anabaptist stories, our reading of the Bible, and our nonconformed practices), we will necessarily pick up and take to heart some other traditions and formative stories.

I am in favor of accepting anything that is scripturally sound, from whatever source—even from the Catholics, which is my upbringing and background. I believe I received much good from Catholicism. But if we are operating under the reactive

mode, we will not be very likely to do this. Instead, we will more likely “throw out the baby with the bath water.” I think I've seen this happen.

Now, I truly believe that our tradition has much good in it that has somehow been lost in many churches. Much of this unique tradition had a part in attracting me in the first place to join a Beachy church. Nonresistance, of course, fits under that heading. But other biblical practices that American evangelicalism has long abandoned, or never practiced, were also part of that biblical approach that I identified over 30 years ago. But because of our undermining attitudes we are in danger of losing many of these good things. Even with the best intentions, it is very difficult to hold onto the good things from our Anabaptist heritage, if we don't stay in a church where others believe and practice those things.

Why is all this so? I don't know if I have answers, but I will offer some possibilities. If this essay provokes discussion, it may help us arrive at clear answers and solutions together.

One problem that I see is rooted in our tradition. John Ruth, a Mennonite church historian, once commented about a key part of Amish tradition. Ruth wrote that Amish culture is quite non-verbal. It is rooted in expressing itself by action, not by verbalizing or with extensive argumentation and evaluation of various ideas. While this willingness to *do* can and does have a good side to it, the lack of emphasis on understanding and explaining is potentially catastrophic. When we were more isolated from the general American culture this factor in our culture may not have had a large impact. But today no one can remain isolated.

I am not advocating isolation, but simply stating that at one time our inclination toward being nonverbal may not have had as large an effect on our families when we tended to be farmers and had less contact with others. With increased contact comes increased

questioning. This is not a bad thing. We Christians are called to be ready at all times “to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason of the hope that is in you . . .” (1 Peter 3:15 ESV).

We need to overcome this tendency to be nonverbal if we wish to maintain the truth we have. This demands hard work, but it yields great gains for understanding and commitment. And learning to understand well what we believe will enable us to pass on our heritage to our children, to win others to Christ, and to practice more completely the Christian walk. And if we could become more able generally to explain ourselves and our beliefs and practices, that would go a long way to remedying the first two attitudes I mentioned.

The Bible really does call believers to a nonconformed lifestyle, and if we understood our practices and how they apply to biblical principles, we would be less likely to be embarrassed by them or discontented. This isn't to say that everything that was traditionally called nonconformity is required, but the doctrine is clearly biblical. We need to maintain nonconformity although we may need to change certain aspects of the tradition to align more with the Bible. But let us not abandon the doctrine.

Another problem that I sometimes see among us is a strong reaction to our background: the Old Order Amish. I recognize that in some localities there were practices that needed to be rejected and that in some cases basic Bible doctrines were ignored or even rejected. But that is not the case everywhere and the traditions themselves had much good in them. I also suspect that sometimes the reaction against our foundational tradition may have had its source in a need to justify the breaking of fellowship. Thus the ones we were leaving needed to be “bad guys” in order for the break to be acceptable.

Even where there were justifiable reasons to break with a particular congregation, how one does it is extremely

important. I myself am thankful that when I left the Catholics I don't think I reacted but instead left with real pain. My reasons were theological, not reactionary. When our focus is reactionary, those against whom we react become our focus and it becomes less likely that we will go on to grow in the best way possible. Instead, the wrong focus will keep us thinking about the very things we have rejected, even if only because they are the things which we never want to accept or do. And consequently, something good is lost because we don't see the good in the tradition being abandoned.

I would suggest that we need to learn to appreciate the good in our heritage and also that we need to evaluate and perhaps even repent of our attitude toward those whom we left. As we strive to understand the meaning of our heritage we will grow in our Christian life. As we repent of improper attitudes toward those we broke fellowship with—for reasons good or bad—we will also grow spiritually. As we grow we will be able to give an answer to those who ask us about our faith.

There are many in this world who are looking not just for “fire insurance” but for a path of life upon which they can walk faithfully with other believers as they all grow closer to God. And there are many who seek to live a “peaceable and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Timothy 2:2 ESV) as they raise their families in a world going farther and farther away from God. I believe our churches can be a place where such seekers could feel at home. But we who are presently part of the church must first feel at home here. Otherwise those who come to join us will likely leave us again because of our contradictions. I think we have something to contribute in bringing the Kingdom of God into the hearts of people. But first we must come to grips with who we are. ■

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# Planning a Budget

by Ethan R. Weaver

Economics are a part of every home. Handling income, expenses, payment deadlines, and financial obligations may especially challenge a new home. No longer does this responsibility rest on Father and Mother, but on the couple that has established the new home.

How finances are handled directly affects home tranquility and stability. It will enhance or hinder the Christian testimony that radiates from a home. Managing this challenge realistically, with goals and purpose, reduces stress and protects family integrity.

Planning a budget begins before marriage. The new couple needs to decide where they will live and what occupation to pursue. Should they purchase or rent a dwelling? Home furnishings need to be obtained. Do they purchase new furniture or buy used appliances? Vehicle needs are considered. Is one vehicle sufficient? Will the present vehicle last for several more years, or will it need to be replaced soon? Many financial decisions are made in the months before a wedding. How does a couple decide these issues? What guidelines help them to plan a budget and manage finances in the new home?

First, look at the income side. What wages are being earned? What is actually brought home? Do earnings fluctuate from week to week? Does any extra income arrive from time to time? These numbers should be put on paper. Generally, it is good to deduct ten percent from the expected income before working with the numbers because there will be days when a person cannot work for various reasons. Income is usually less than expected rather than more. After the income numbers have been carefully and realistically calculated, they should

be laid aside temporarily and reviewed later for accuracy.

Expected expenditures need to be scrutinized. Once again, put them on paper. This list needs to be very detailed. How much will the rent or mortgage payment be? Are there any car payments? What is the expected electric bill? How much will be spent on heat? What will the telephone bill be? How much do we need for gasoline? What will groceries cost? What is needed each month for clothing? The car will need repair from time to time. The roof may need to be replaced. Are the well and septic systems sufficient? All of these and more are factors that need to be considered when planning a budget.

Usually it is wise to add ten percent to total expected expenditures to help defray unforeseen costs that will come. Be practical and realistic; there are costs to establishing a home. Fudging numbers to make room for extras does not change the actual bills as they arrive. Planning on the safe side prepares for comfortable and relaxed living. Review this list from time to time and make any needed adjustments as you plan for your home.

When planning a budget, plan for saving. Every budget should include laying aside some money in a savings account. In the future, you may need to add a room to the house. Sometime you will need resources to replace a vehicle or repair one damaged in an accident. Medical bills can come suddenly and will need to be paid. Monies in a savings account are greatly appreciated at these times.

The question that comes when planning for savings, is, how much should be laid aside each week? Should only the