

The Sword and Trumpet

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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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3. To be at word both in buying and selling.
4. To pawn nothing, no, not to save life.
5. Not to mention the fault of any behind his back, and to stop short those that do.
6. To wear no needless ornaments, such as rings, earrings, necklaces, lace, ruffles.
7. To use no needless self-indulgence, such as taking snuff or tobacco, unless prescribed by a physician.

II. Zealously to maintain good works; in particular,—

1. To give alms of such things as you possess, and that to the uttermost of your power.
2. To reprove all that sin in your sight, and that in love and meekness of wisdom.
3. To be patterns of diligence and frugality, of self-denial, and taking up the cross daily.

III. Constantly to attend on all the ordinances of God; in particular,—

1. To be at church and at the Lord's table every week and at every public meeting of the Bands.
2. To attend the ministry of the Word every morning, unless distance, business, or sickness prevent.
3. To use private prayer every day; and family prayer, if you are at the head of a family.
4. To read the Scriptures, and meditate therein, at every vacant hour. And,
5. To observe, as days of fasting or abstinence, all Fridays in the year.

He observed these before his heart-warming experience at Aldersgate.

But there is another question to ask, "Is there any reason to believe the Christians only believed these things beginning with the eighteenth century?" The answer is no. Read the Ante-Nicene Fathers and find the teaching of the early Church. Are matters of right and wrong simply determined by majority vote of conventions in session, or do they have an objective reality in the teachings of Christ and the gospels?

Peter and Paul gave instructions con-

cerning these matters. First Timothy 2:9: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." First Peter 3:3: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel." These teachings are not less weighty than the Lord's instruction; they are inspired by the Holy Spirit and are God's Word.

These passages are not exhaustive but suggestive. The rule for the Church is that it may only ordain those things stated explicitly in the Scriptures or may be proved thereby. These texts have been marginalized by some as being "culturally conditioned." Yet the culture they rejected is the very same culture we face today.

The passages do not state explicitly the teaching of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, nor that of the Holy Club or the Rules for the Class Meetings of Wesley's ministry. They do not state the things Wesley discovered in his walk with the Lord; but they are the proof of those things which the Holy Spirit revealed to him.

The Church has always had an interest in the modesty and godly adornment, "a meek and quiet spirit," which illustrates the Gospel we preach. To be born again, to be sanctified, means that we are wholly different people who "love not the world, neither the things which are in the world."

Since many have compromised with the world, we have determined that we will not. Early in my ministry a wise and godly man advised me: "We must be radical because the gospel is radical. But we dare not be ultra radical, for these do not save their children." This is not always true, but the wisdom of my advisor was a guide to me through nearly fifty years of pastoral ministry and in the raising of our children.

When I was yet a young Christian I was advised to be hard on myself and easy on others. It is good advice. "Judge yourself and you will not be condemned." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Faith in the Future*, January/February, 2006

Person of the Month:

William Cowper (1731-1800)



William Cowper (pronounced Cooper, 1731-1800) was one of those enigmas of life where creative talent is torturously combined with introspection and melancholy.

Cowper was the fourth of seven children born to an English minister. He had a tender disposition, but the deaths of numerous loved ones over the years—including that of his beloved mother when Cowper was only six—coupled with being bullied by an older student at school and being denied marriage to the love of his life, left Cowper emotionally despondent and fragile.

Trained as an attorney, Cowper was offered a post as a clerk to the House of Lords in 1763. But while anticipating the formal review, the pressure became too much. He attempted suicide and had a nervous breakdown.

Cowper was sent to an asylum for recovery. The director and attending physician there was an evangelical Christian named Nathaniel Cotton. Dr. Cotton nursed Cowper back to health. But the greatest balm for Cowper's ills was what he found one day while strolling the grounds.

Someone had left an open Bible on a chair. Cowper read the passage from John 11 that spoke of Christ's sorrow at Lazarus' tomb. He was impressed with Jesus' compassion. Later, in his own Bible, he discovered Romans 3:25. Referring to Jesus, it says, "whom God set forth as a propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed."

It was then, in 1764, that Cowper believed the gospel and became a Christian.

Over the ensuing years, Cowper continued to struggle with fits of depression. But God provided comfort through His Word, as well as through the many Christian friends who saw him through his dark days.

A gifted poet, Cowper eventually became a poet laureate. But he also used his talents for the Lord, writing many hymns, including "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," with its famous last line, "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." Cowper also collaborated with his close friend, John Newton, to write and publish a collection of hymns known as *Olney Hymns*.

Based on Zechariah 13:1 and dated around 1771, the hymn "There is a Fountain Filled With Blood" expresses Cowper's love and gratitude for the Saviour's cleansing blood and power to save—a truth Cowper knew personally.

—Bruce Scott

—Reprinted with permission from *Israel My Glory*, March/April, 2007

A Healthy View of Technology

by Samson Eicher, Butler, IN

This topic need not be divisive if we diligently apply the principles we have been taught in these meetings. It can be a blessing that allows us to work together and realize God's will rather than dividing us. God's mission for mankind is given in Genesis 1:27-31. God gave man the *mission*, the *means*, and the *motivation* to carry out the tasks He gave him.

I believe technology is a gift. Technology is more of a *discovery* than a *creation* by man. Without technology, we could not sustain the current population on earth. Satan attempts to destroy the good gifts God makes available through technology. For this reason, discretion and caution are needed. But there is a big difference between involved caution and detached skepticism. Naturally, when we don't understand something, we fear it.

Technology is the application of physical principles. Examples of this are the internal combustion engine, the printing press, communication satellites, improved food production, improved medical technology, improved transportation, work conditions with less drudgery, increased quality and length of life, (infant deaths in the United States in 1911—135 per 1,000; in 2000—6.7 deaths per 1,000; in 1900, life expectancy—47 years; 1990—76 years).

These are blessings from God but they have sometimes also been abused by mankind. An atheistic history professor of mine acknowledged that while he dislikes Christianity, he believes Christian people were the ones who were unafraid of subduing the earth and thus they helped usher the world into the modern age. Pagan people were afraid of spirits that lived in the woods and wherever, so they shrank back. I find that an interesting admission from an atheist.

We can feed the world better today than we did in the 1960s, despite the dire predictions then of widespread starvation by the year 2000.

Contrary to Greek scientists who once confidently declared that there are 3,000 stars, today's estimate is 70 sextillion, which equals 10 times as many stars as there are grains of sand on earth. I have only a little idea of what that means, but He is the God of might and strength and awe!

Some feel that modern technology violates Christian simplicity. My understanding of simplicity's use in the New Testament is *single-mindedness* rather than *simple-mindedness*. *Simplicity* in Romans 12:8 refers to generosity.

Does Satan use technology to try to corrupt us? Absolutely! Satan is not a creator; he perverts what God has created.

Satan tries to use every good thing for our destruction. Take, for instance, sexual intimacy. In marriage it is a blessing, but Satan has perverted it to bring about all sorts of deviations from God's design. Other examples are Satan's twisting of such things as *eating* and *ambition*.

Some of the dangers of technology, especially the Internet, I see:

1) Private access: We are only as spiritual as we are when no one is looking over our shoulder.

2) Accessibility: Much good and much evil is available at our fingertips.

3) Addiction: Proper use doesn't cost time, it saves time. Addiction indicates evasion of responsibility.

Is there protection for these hazards? Yes, there is! Scriptural principle is not rendered obsolete in any age. Jesus is not scratching His head and wondering what to do about it.

Let me mention three things that relate

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to this problem:

1) Christ's presence is with us. As we know the Holy Spirit well, we will detect the counterfeit.

2) Accountability to and interaction with the brotherhood. In monthly men's meetings, for instance, we should hold each other accountable.

3) Awareness of what is out there that could benefit us. Use without abuse or over-use.

Colossians 2:14 cautions about going back to observing Jewish law. Then in verse 18 we have, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." Thus it warns against going back into the Mosaic Law.

In Chapter 3, we have that beautiful antidote to that problem: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. . . ."

Many electronic devices, such as filters, are designed to help us. I used to keep a complete list, but there are so many now, that I will give only several:

1) Software filtering: These scan a Web site for certain words.

2) White listing and black listing: Approved and disapproved sites.

3) *Characterlink* is one of the safest, but

is also very restrictive.

4) *Covenant Eyes* has both accountability and filtering programs.

5) And many more.

It's good to leave a trail of where we've been.

What's coming up in technology? No one knows. There tends to be an integration of technology. Because the Internet has become the backbone of communication, many of the separate pieces of technology will be integrated. It might be helpful to say it this way: The Internet has become business-safe and business-friendly. Furthermore, it appears that we will be able to buy services rather than individual pieces of technology.

This is consumer-driven, so it is in the best interests of these companies to give us choices. It appears that we will get the services we pay for. Hence, we will not be confronted with public television programming, even though we use some of the technology that uses the "communication backbone."

We can still make the right choices just like our brothers and sisters did in apostolic times. In the times of our Anabaptist forefathers the choices were hard, but they could choose to do right and we must do so too. The potential of this technology is great. Let us use it for God's glory. ■

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From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

The Last Surrendered Outpost

Author Unknown

It usually happens that our economic interests are the last areas of our life to be surrendered to Christ. It very often happens that we find it far easier to break with vicious habits, or to make peace with old-time enemies, than to bring all of our possessions under subjection to the Lord Christ.

A homespun old farmer in Kansas was talking about this very matter with his pastor. He had not been a Christian long, and was explaining the struggle he had gone through before his present preacher arrived on the scene.

"Guess the truth of the matter was that I was just plain stingy," he said, and reports that the preacher had received from other sources previously, confirmed the man's confession. "I found it awful hard to let go of money, and my family was suffering because of it. My girls were not taking music lessons as they should

have, and my oldest boy was getting just a little bitter because I wouldn't agree to let him go in to town to high school.

"But I was really honest about my new religious life, and I was trying mighty hard to make a success of it. But it seemed like every time I prayed this thing of money would come up before my mind. I couldn't shake it. I couldn't argue with it.

"Finally one day out in the field in the back lot I got down on my knees alongside the fence and I promised the Lord that I would loosen up a little. That gave me a little peace, and then I went farther. I said, 'Lord, I've always laughed at the missionaries, but just to prove my case I'll give them twenty-five dollars.' Right then the battle started. The devil says to me, 'Why, Dave, that's too much. You can't afford it. You mustn't.' And then I knew I had to go through with it,

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and I says to the devil, 'Old fellow, I'm going to double it. I'll make it fifty.'

"And do you know, that old devil wouldn't give up on me. I kept raisin' my promise, and raisin' it. I was determined to get it up to the place where he'd call it quits and leave me alone. And I had to make it four hundred dollars before I got any peace of mind.

"Well, sir, I was so afraid that I'd change my mind and lose out that I went up to the house, got into the car, and drove over to the preacher, with my check book. And I gave him a check of four hundred dollars before the sun went down. He'd known me, and he'd known

how stingy I was, and I guess that four hundred just about shook him down to the ground. But he took it, and thanked me, and then prayed for me.

"And that's the way I won the battle. After that, every time I began to get cautious I'd double my promise. Sometimes I had to do it several times, but after a while I got so much fun out of it that I lifted it before I had to double it."

That was the reason the people in that farming community said, "Dave's sure got religion. Nothing else could have changed him." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Evangelist of Truth*

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

JUNE 3, 2007

Amos Decries Injustice

Amos 5:10-24

Amos 1:1 identifies the prophet as a simple herdsman from Tekoa. It also identifies the time of his prophecy as being during the reigns of Uzziah (Judah) and Jeroboam (Israel). Amos, from the southern kingdom of Judah was sent by God to prophesy to the northern kingdom of Israel. This in itself made him *persona non grata* (see 7:10-13), in addition to his message of doom and destruction. He

cried out against their luxurious but corrupt lifestyle and their social injustices.

Amos makes it clear that he is simply God's mouthpiece. The phrase "Thus saith the Lord" occurs no less than 12 times in the first five chapters. In brief, his message was an appeal from God to turn from their evil actions and self-indulgent living and He would spare them. However, they would not, did not, heed the message and some 30-40 years later were taken into captivity by the Assyrians, thus bringing to a tragic end 10 tribes of God's chosen people, those for whom He had done so much in the past

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(Read the entire book for the setting.)

Into a setting of unprecedented prosperity and social corruption and spiritual idolatry marched the simple farmer from Tekoa with a message from God, outlining their sins and calling them to repentance. As our lesson text picks up at verse 10, Amos is reciting a litany of Israel's sins. They hate those who rebuke evil, they despise those who tell the truth, they mistreat the poor and have built expensive mansions and planted pleasant vineyards for their own pleasure and enjoyment. They were guilty of oppressing the righteous, accepting bribes and robbing the poor of justice. It is a picture, not unlike that of today, of a society given to greed and self-seeking pleasure while ignoring the plight of the poor.

It was such a time of accepted injustice that even those who saw the evil and were disturbed by it were hesitant to speak up (v. 13). Verse 10 sheds light on verse 13. Indeed it was an evil time. Righteousness and justice were downtrodden. And God was incensed at the actions of His people.

Amos, the fearless prophet, appealed to them on behalf of God to forsake their evil, unjust ways and institute spiritual reforms. It may be, he said, that the "Lord God of hosts will be gracious" to you. But if they did not repent, God would pass through them with judgment. And then they would mourn, not for their sins, but for the judgment visited upon them by a righteous God.

It would seem (v. 18) that these people, in delusion over their own sin, were wishing for the "day of the Lord" to bring judgment upon their enemies. But it will not be to their favor simply because they are of the house of Israel. They will not escape judgment, as portrayed in verse 19. They were holding to a false sense of security.

God makes it clear in verses 22 and 23 that all their professed righteousness and acts of worship would be to no avail as long as injustice prevails in their relationships. God will not be "bought off" by

insincere acts of worship used to cover up a life of injustice and evil. His antidote is found in verse 24: "Let judgment and righteousness flow down as a mighty stream," cleansing injustice and evil and bringing life-giving water to the people. This is also sorely needed in our day.

For thought and discussion

1. Does it take more than simple courage to speak an unpopular message to an unwilling audience? What else is essential?
2. Does prosperity always bring spiritual apathy and social injustice? What do you think? Discuss.
3. Is there any excuse for the church to get involved in social programs? If so, what? And to what degree of involvement that will not detract from its spiritual mandate? Discuss.
4. Do we, as did Israel, tend to hide behind our heritage instead of allowing the searchlight of God's Word to cleanse and purify us of injustice and evil?
5. What are some practical ways we can promote justice and righteousness? Discuss.

JUNE 10, 2007

Hosea Pleads for Repentance

Hosea 4:1-4; 7:1, 2; 12:6-9; 14:1

Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos, was from the northern kingdom and it was to them that his message was directed. The time of his prophesying is identified in verse 1 of Chapter 1. God's initial instruction to Hosea was to take to himself an unfaithful wife who would be illustrative of the nation Israel's unfaithfulness to God. Even Hosea's children's names reflected God's displeasure with His people.

There follows throughout the book an enumeration of Israel's sins and the Lord's continued pleading with them to repent and turn back to Him for mercy

and forgiveness. Our text in Chapter 4 begins with an appeal to “hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel.” The people were at odds with God because their behavior was opposed to all that God stands for—truth, mercy, and righteousness.

There was a complete absence of goodness in the land. Evil was pervasive. God’s punishment would be in the form of drought, affecting land, man, and beast. Correction would not come by accusing one another or shifting blame to another (v. 4). Correction would come only when each individual recognized his faults before God and pled for His mercy and forgiveness.

How sad that when God would have healed Israel (7:1), their sins overwhelmed them. Evil deeds and injustice were the norm. It seemed they were so steeped in their wicked ways that even God could not get through to them with a message of warning. They were also so deluded they even thought they could hide their sins from God’s watchful eye (7:2). But they were plain to see. God knew full well their wickedness. Nothing escapes the eye of our all-seeing God.

In Chapter 12 Hosea points out the worthlessness of Israel’s pursuits. They are chasing the wind. Once again (v. 6), an appeal is made to “turn to God and keep mercy and judgment.” But injustice had such a hold on them that they would not, could not, turn from their evil ways wherein they found pleasure. They were also trusting in their riches, which were gained by fraud and injustice. They did not realize that riches do not outweigh sin on God’s scales.

In verse 9 God again reminds them of His faithfulness. He is the same God who brought Israel out of Egypt. He still cares for His people and yearns for their positive response to His goodness and love. The latter part of verse 9 can be interpreted either as God’s judgment which will reduce them to poverty and living in tents, or as prediction of a future time

when they have repented and returned to a worship of God and observance of the feasts dedicated to Him.

In the last verse of our lesson text, 14:1, the prophet makes one final, passionate appeal: “Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall” (NIV). Hosea then goes on, in the following verses, to outline the path to restored favor with God and His positive response should they turn to Him. Verse 9 summarizes the situation succinctly: God’s ways are right; those who heed them are wise; those who refuse will come to ruin. Hosea’s message spans the ages. We, too, must heed God’s call.

For thought and discussion

1. Think again through the issue of why people of privilege seem to so easily turn away from God. Does self-sufficiency necessarily bring spiritual poverty? Discuss.
2. Does God still use the forces of nature to wake man out of spiritual lethargy? Explain.
3. Did you ever attempt to hide sin from God? Did it work? What happened?
4. Attempt to correlate the rise in wealth with the decline of spirituality. Why does this so often happen?
5. Can you explain why people so easily spurn God’s call to repentance and life? What lies at the root of rejection?

JUNE 17, 2007

Isaiah Denounces Insincere Worship

Isaiah 1:10-20

Again, with Isaiah, the time and place of his ministry is recorded in verse 1 of Chapter 1. He was from the southern kingdom of Judah, to which his message was directed. He prophesied perhaps 50 years, from the reign of Uzziah (see 6:1) to that of Hezekiah (Chapter 38). He was a younger contemporary of Hosea whom

we studied in last week's lesson. His message was the same: "The Lord hath a controversy with His people." They were bent on sinning. He faithfully called them to repentance.

Our text begins with the appeal to "hear the word of the Lord." The message was directed to the rulers and common people alike. Sodom and Gomorrah are used here figuratively. They were destroyed because of their wickedness. Judah and Jerusalem would suffer the same fate unless they turned to God in repentance.

The thrust of Isaiah's message in verses 11-15 is the Lord's disgust with the insincerity of the people's worship. There was outward show and performance, but the heart and the motives were not in agreement with their actions. God uses strong language to deride their hypocrisy and show His disdain for their supposed devotion.

The things the people were doing were not wrong in themselves. In fact, God had established the sacrifices, the festivals, the burnt offerings, the sabbaths, and the assemblies. Their purposes were to create a spiritual relationship between God and His people. But that relationship was to be predicated upon a pure heart, one that sought God in response to His goodness. The people of Isaiah's day, however, had turned their worship into a hollow, meaningless ritual. God could not stomach it.

Not only were these people worshiping from insincere hearts, there is evidence that they were using these religious observances to cover unrepented sin. This made it doubly displeasing to God. However, in spite of God's displeasure He does hold out an appeal for them to come and dialogue with Him, not to give them opportunity to defend their sinful ways, but for Him to offer mercy and forgiveness in return for genuine repentance.

Notice the preconditions in verses 16 and 17. First of all, there must be a purifying of life, a repentance from evil deeds. And, secondly, good and worthwhile deeds

must replace the evil. It is interesting that they were to "learn to do well." Apparently their evil lifestyle had such a hold on them that they had to unlearn evil and learn to practice good—a sad commentary on the depths of their depravity. The sins Isaiah describes here paralleled the sins the Prophet Amos decried in our lesson for June 3.

God holds out the promise that if they repent and turn from their sins, despicable as they are, He will cleanse them, turning the crimson of sin into the white of snow. God makes a further promise in verse 19. In exchange for their obedience He will bless them with the good of the land. But again God shows the other side of the coin. If they refuse and rebel He will allow them to be devoured by the sword of their enemies.

God clinches His argument by asserting that He has spoken. The next move is up to them.

For thought and discussion

1. What does it mean to "hear the word of the Lord"? Is more than the ear involved? Explain.
2. What turns worship into a farce?
3. Are we immune in our day to hypocrisy in worship? In what areas do we need to be careful? What steps must we take to maintain meaningful worship? Discuss.
4. What are some ways we can "relieve the oppressed, help the fatherless and widows"? Discuss.
5. Why do people not take God's Word seriously?

JUNE 24, 2007

The Great Invitation

Isaiah 55:1-13

In Isaiah 55 we get insight into the great and merciful heart of God. This is a prophetic passage, full of hope for a downtrodden people. It is also a very

practical passage outlining the call of God to sinful man and His mercy in accepting those who come to Him to have their spiritual thirst assuaged. In it we see the universality of the gospel message, the terms of free grace, and the authenticating of the offer by the sovereign God.

It seems rather clear that the Lord Himself is the speaker throughout most of the chapter. The exception would be verses 6 and 7 where it is obvious that Isaiah is the speaker. God personally makes the appeal and then Isaiah emphasizes the urgency and outlines the steps necessary to obtain God's favor.

God couches His appeal in enticing terms. Everyone who is spiritually thirsty is invited to come, and the offer is free, totally without cost. The satisfaction goes beyond the mere assuaging of thirst; it is also pleasurable, delightful. In contrast to pursuits which do not satisfy, the acceptance of God's free offer brings deep soul satisfaction and holds promise beyond the present. God's sure mercies are exemplified in the Messiah, here referred to figuratively as David. Verse 5 speaks of Israel's future role in bringing the message and Messenger of salvation to nations beyond their own. Though Isaiah predicted captivity, a day of return, renewal, and increased influence were in Israel's future. God would yet glorify Israel.

In verses 6 and 7 Isaiah interjects the brief formula for getting right with God. The first step is to seek Him, to show a strong desire to know Him and His saving grace. Incumbent also on the seeker is the necessity of a changed life, a new motivation, a renewed mind, a complete turnaround. Then, and only then, when God sees sincerity, will He respond with mercy and pardon. Note that His forgiveness is abundant, full, generous, complete.

God again picks up the narrative in verse 8, declaring His superiority and sovereignty. He states that His plans are

beyond man's comprehension and understanding. But, though incomprehensible to man, God's plans do have purpose and they will accomplish the purposes for which He designs them. He likens His Word to life-giving moisture falling upon the earth to produce food for man. It will accomplish the purpose for which He sends it.

Verses 12 and 13 seem to refer prophetically to the time of Israel's deliverance from captivity, some 100 years yet in the future from Isaiah's writing. (See 35:10.) It would indeed be a time of great rejoicing as God's promises come to fruition and His people experience the fullness of His blessing. Figuratively, even nature itself will rejoice and exult in the blessings visited upon God's chosen people.

Several times in this passage the certainty of the Lord's Word is referred to. It should give us great confidence to know that what He has promised, that He will perform. As we look back on history we can face the future confidently, knowing that God who has promised will also bring His purposes to pass.

For thought and discussion

1. Think about how God has quenched your spiritual hunger and thirst. What was your role?
2. This passage should make it clear that one cannot "buy" his or her way into God's favor. What are some ways people attempt to do that?
3. How does one "seek" the Lord? What is involved? What is necessary?
4. How do verses 12 and 13 depict the changes in the life of an individual who seeks and finds God and subsequently experiences the fullness of His blessing?
5. What can we do to develop a greater appreciation for God's Word and the promises He has made to mankind? In what ways has the fulfillment of God's promises strengthened your spiritual life and understanding? ■

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

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

British Naval Vessel Captured by Iran

The Iranian Navy stopped and captured a small British patrol boat that was combatting smuggling and inspecting ships coming into Iraqi harbors. The 15 British sailors and marines are being held by Iran which has threatened to charge them with espionage. Iran claims the inflatable British craft had strayed into Iranian waters, but the boat's GPS data and the testimony of local fishermen that witnessed the takeover are quite clear that they were well within Iraqi waters. The hijack is said to be revenge for the U.S. and Britain capturing Iranian agents supplying weapons and fomenting violence in Iraq. The Iranians have offered to release the squadies in return for the release of 50+ Iranian agents caught in Iraq.

—Sources: *The Peninsula* (a Qatar newspaper),
The Daily Mirror (UK), *The Daily Telegraph*
(UK)

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Humans Hardwired to Believe in Supernatural Deity?

According to a Sunday *New York Times* article [<http://tinyurl.com/233a3j>], 6 in 10 Americans believe in the devil and hell, 7 in 10 believe in angels, heaven and the existence of miracles and life after death, while 92% believe in a personal God. The article explores the possibility that this belief structure may be ingrained into our genetic makeup. "When a trait is universal, evolutionary

biologists look for a genetic explanation and wonder how that gene or genes might enhance survival or reproductive success. . . . Which is the better biological explanation for a belief in God—evolutionary adaptation or neurological accident? Is there something about the cognitive functioning of humans that makes us receptive to belief in a supernatural deity?"

—Excerpt from "Humans Hardwired to Believe in Supernatural Deity?" on *Slashdot* (<http://tinyurl.com/3d9er6>)

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More Laws Against Veilings

The British Department for Education and Skills issued a new directive to its schools allowing them to ban students from wearing full-face veils.

—Source: *OneNewsNow.com*

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Cultural Conservative Victories

There has been a continuing string of victories for cultural conservatives across America. The Oklahoma Senate passed a bill prohibiting the use of state funds for abortions. Missouri lawmakers stopped the flow of funds to Planned Parenthood clinics. The South Carolina House of Representatives recently passed a bill that requires a mother to see an ultrasound of the young baby before choosing to abort it. A social scientist at the University of Alabama has said in a recent study that the 20%

decline in abortion rates since 1990 is due to these incremental pro-life restrictions at the state level.

—Sources: *OneNewsNow.com* and *Baptist Press*

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Young Native Missionary/Pastor Shot While Leading Prayer Meeting

During a prayer meeting, two armed men entered a small tin shack serving as a church. Claiming to be police, they asked the pastor to stand. As soon as he did, they shot him twice in the head and left. Kevin Austin was the 34-year-old pastor of a small church he recently started in the small village of St. Mary’s in southern Trinidad. He had been moving from village to village starting churches and discipling young Christians. His widow said, “His vision was to establish Gospel villages by training people from a young age. That’s why we started a mission here.”

—Source: *ASSIST News Service*

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Britain House of Lords Passes Anti-Discrimination Law

The British House of Lords has passed a law that would make discriminating against homosexuals illegal. Christian conference centers would be forced to rent their facilities to homosexual groups, bed and breakfasts would be forced to offer service to homosexual couples, and Christian schools would be forced to treat homosexuality on par with heterosexuality in their curricula.

—Source: *ASSIST News Service*

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24/7 Prayers Aim to Spark Revival

Several Christian groups have recently rediscovered the power of prayer and have been enthusiastically embracing it as a means to spark revival. One such organization, 24/7 Prayer USA, exists “to transform the world through a movement of Christ-centered

and mission-minded prayer.” Their Web site says, “We recognize that the Body of Christ in the West is bleeding young people. Something has to change. But clever strategy alone is not the answer. Never has been. History shows that the tide turns when God’s people pray.” They have been organizing a string of 24/7 prayer meetings at campuses across the U.S.

—Source: *The Christian Post*

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Pope Warns Europe About Population Decline

The Pope issued a warning to Europe regarding their declining birth rates and population. He said, “One must unfortunately note that Europe seems to be going down a road which could lead it to take its leave from history.” The EU average fertility rate, children per woman, is 1.47. 2.1 is considered the lowest rate that prevents population decline. This reminds me of demographic studies which have been done in the U.S. that show that atheists are aborting their babies and having small families, thus decreasing their numbers. Meanwhile, strong Christian families have been having big families. Muslims also have been having big families—on a list of the top twenty countries by fertility rate, thirteen are Muslim. The shifting demographics of decadent Western society present a historic opportunity to influence the world for Christ—or for Muhammad. Muslims, and a few Christians, are embracing this opportunity.

—Sources: *Associated Press*, *Wikipedia*, and *The CIA World Fact Book*

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Russian Supreme Court Liquidates Opposition Party

Russia’s next parliament is likely to have no genuine opposition after a court in Moscow yesterday banned a leading liberal party from standing in elections.

Russia’s Supreme Court announced

that it had liquidated the small Republican party, claiming that it had violated electoral law by having too few members. The party is one of very few left in Russia that criticizes President Vladimir Putin.

The move against Russia's opposition came as pro-democracy activists prepared for the latest in a series of anti-government rallies that have infuriated Russia's hardline authorities.

Hundreds of demonstrators are expected to gather today in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia's fourth biggest city. The protesters from The Other Russia, a coalition of opposition groups, are expected to march, despite attempts by pro-Kremlin officials to prevent them from demonstrating.

"The march's leaders are being called in by police and intimidated. We are half a step away from a police state," Denis Bilunov, a member of the march's organizing committee, told the Guardian. "There isn't much point in talking about democracy in Russia any more."

—Excerpt from "Supreme Court Ban on Liberal Party Wipes Out Opposition to Putin" in the *UK Guardian Unlimited* (<http://tinyurl.com/2tjacs>)

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Russian Police Brutally Suppress Opposition Rally

[This news item occurred several days after the previous item.] Russian police controlled by Russian President Vladimir Putin, formerly of the KGB, viciously beat hundreds of protesters in the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod. Hundreds more were tracked down before the rally and arrested. The police, in full riot gear, were nearly as many in number as the protesters. This is the third time in recent months that such a major, violent crackdown has occurred. The *Associated Press* article says, "Since taking office in 2000, Putin has made steps to centralize power and eliminate democratic checks and balances. He has created an obedient parliament, abol-

ished direct gubernatorial elections, tightened restrictions on rights groups, and presided over the reining-in of non-state television channels."

—Source: *Associated Press*

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Sperm Whale Explodes in Taiwan

A dead sperm whale, being transported on the back of a flatbed semi-trailer, exploded in downtown Tainan, Taiwan. Gases from the decomposing innards built up pressure until the 60-ton, 56-foot whale suddenly exploded on a busy city street. BBC News quoted a local resident as saying, "What a stinking mess. This blood and other stuff that blew out on the road is disgusting, and the smell is really awful." The whale was being transported for study by marine biologists.

—Sources: *MSNBC* and *BBC News*

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Wealth Redistribution Through Taxation

Overall, we find that America's lowest-earning one-fifth of households received roughly \$8.21 in government spending for each dollar of taxes paid in 2004. Households with middle incomes received \$1.30 per tax dollar, and America's highest-earning households received \$0.41. Government spending targeted at the lowest-earning 60 percent of U.S. households is larger than what they paid in federal, state, and local taxes. In 2004, between \$1.03 trillion and \$1.53 trillion was redistributed downward from the two highest income quintiles to the three lowest income quintiles through government taxes and spending policy.

—Excerpt from the Tax Foundation's summary of their new report "Who Pays America's Tax Burden, and Who Gets the Most Government Spending?" (<http://tinyurl.com/32b7uf>)

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



Counseling From the Word

How Christian Is "Christian Counseling"?

Confessions of a Christian Psychologist

by Dr. Sam R. Williams

What makes "Christian counseling" Christian? Is it Christian because the counselor is a Christian? Is it Christian if he/she prays with you, or for you? Is it Christian if he quotes a few Bible verses? Is it Christian if he encourages you to pray or go to church or read your Bible? Is it Christian if he quotes or recommends or relies on James Dobson, Larry Crabb, Frank Minirth, or Paul Meier? What is the bottom line that makes "Christian counseling" Christian?

St. Paul was thoroughly and radically convinced that Christ's work on the cross and His incarnational reality ("Christ in you, the hope of glory," Colossians 1:27) were an exploding, eternal display of God's power and wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5). His mission was "to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power." He announced a new Kingdom epistemology: "Christ, in whom are hidden *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* . . . so that no one may deceive you with *plausible* arguments. . . . See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy which *depends on* human traditions . . . rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:2-4, 8).

What does "Christian counseling" *depend on*, rely upon, trust in for the cure of souls? Does "Christian counseling"

treasure the wisdom and power found in Christ and His cross or does it treasure and depend on hollow philosophy and human traditions? What is powerful in "Christian counseling"? What turns the prop and makes it fly? Is God's Word and Spirit the engine or the caboose?

I am a Christian psychologist who is no longer enchanted by the wonders of secular psycho-therapy or "Christian" counseling. I have seen how my attempts to "integrate" the *plausible* wonders of secular psychology with my Christian beliefs inevitably result in the cross of Christ being "emptied of its power." My attempts to borrow from Sigmund Freud, B. F. Skinner, Albert Ellis, William Glasser, and Carl Rogers, weaving their diagnoses (who is man and what is wrong with him) and cures (therapeutic techniques/change strategies) into my "Christian control beliefs" and "Christian worldview" have failed, even though some of my former patients might tell you I helped them feel better, cope more effectively, or stay out of trouble.

The question that haunts me is this: Are they any closer to the Kingdom of the King? Did my assistance in alleviating their pain and suffering enable or detract them from seeing their most pressing need: That they are sinners in need of mercy and grace? That their misery results from sin, usually their own and sometimes that of others against them? That their suffering was intended or allowed by a sovereign, merciful, providential God to bring them to Him and make them good and whole and useful in His eyes?

Dr. Sam Williams is the assistant professor of pastoral care and counseling at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Dr. David Powlison, pastoral theologian and Biblical counselor, observes, “The net effect in every integrationist’s system is that secular error eats up Biblical truth, so that false views of human nature and of the change/counseling process control the system.” The cross of Christ is emptied of its power.

“Over the past 150 years, the Church has relinquished much of its counseling role to mental health professionals.”

Does God’s Word really get at what ails us and prescribe a cure for souls, effective in the practical daily trenches of life as it is lived? Or does it only apply to “spiritual” matters, to “faith and practice”? Is the gospel’s only target our private little spirits?

Over the past 150 years, the church has relinquished much of its counseling role to mental health professionals. God has been privatized, the church marginalized, and mental health professionals (what do they profess?) reign as secular priests, ordained by the state to handle the real problems of life. Philip Rieff poignantly observed that the therapeutic is “the most revolutionary of all modern movements—toward a new world of nothing sacred. . . . There is therapy where theology once was. . . . Religious man was born to be saved, psychological man is born to be pleased.” The Church has defaulted and modern people drink from cisterns that purport to slake their thirst and meet their real need. Is the best help found in a private office, one-to-one, with a professional at a cost of \$100 per hour? Does the Church have anything to offer to lost, hopeless, disordered, hurting, wicked (just like us) people? Could it be that the 2,000-year-old paradigm for helping people who hurt and suffer, although dusty, is better than the new one?

The pivotal question becomes: Just how

relevant and sufficient is the Church’s Book? Our post-modern, post-Christian culture is madly in love with what is new or now, and reflexively believes that newer is always better. After all, my father’s primitive calculator of the 1960s can’t compare to my 2005 computer. But, are new *ideas* better than old ones? Are we thinking better at the start of this new millennium than we did at the beginning of the previous one, as to who we really are and why we do what we do, and what is wrong with us and how to fix it? Is the diagnosis and cure of God’s Word outdated or is it in need of improvement?

Diagnosis precedes and dictates treatment. Once a problem is rightly defined, the solution logically follows. If our primary problem is sin and evil (rebelliousness, lusts, inordinate desires, idols), then we must look to God for His solutions, techniques, and methods. Evangelism and justification, discipleship and sanctification, can be taken down off the church’s shelves and plugged in to cure ailing souls.

If, on the other hand, we define problems in modern secular psychological terms, we take a different road to change. If my basic problem is that I have an “empty love tank” or that my “search for significance” has been frustrated, that my felt needs (security, approval, acceptance, validation, whatever) haven’t been met by my spouse or my family-of-origin, then I will look for horizontal, psychological, man-centered solutions—solutions that reify my needs, focus me on myself, and make other people into gods who would satisfy needs. We crave or fear or hate other people. The outcome is, according to Philip Rieff, a “culture of the never satisfied.” Or, as my mother once told me, “Son, you’ll never, *ever* get enough of what you don’t *really* need.”

I cannot find one shred of evidence in The Book that supports this sort of diagnosis. The cures for these diagnoses take us farther away from God, rather than to the One who promised to give us what we need most and lasts longer: Freedom from

the guilt I've earned; freedom from the present tyranny of ourselves and sin; and freedom to love God and my neighbor. God's Word does not define us or what ails us in psychological-need categories. It does define us as divine image bearers sent here to know, choose, serve, love, and worship. We are active verbs—not empty cups. We are irretrievably religious beings, born to worship or fear or love someone or something. Faith or idolatry, God or gods. Take your pick.

Dr. Powlison proclaims,

Scripture is about what counseling is about. . . . The relevance and sufficiency of Scripture is not just a matter of rhetoric; 'The Bible, the Bible, the Bible.' . . . Scripture goes into action and changes people. The Bible's relevance and sufficiency for the cure of souls is immediate and practical. This is more than abstract theory or the affirmation that counseling must proceed within the general boundaries of a Christian worldview. In the counseling discipline, Scripture gives much more than the contours of a worldview. The instructions Paul wrote in his epistles were designed to *change* lives in particular ways. Jesus taught His disciples with the intention of *changing* their motives, actions, words, attitudes, beliefs, and priorities. . . . God didn't talk and act to fill up pages. He spoke in order to transform the way we live. . . . Robust, Biblical Christianity speaks a better and truer word to the problems of living. . . . Because Scripture is about what counseling is about, it makes sense that the cure of souls will continue to be a major cultural and religious battlefield as we enter the twenty-first century—a battlefield on which God will greatly glorify Himself by changing lives.

When Jesus was asked what the bottom line of life was about, He said it was about being totally preoccupied, literally obsessed, with loving God and loving others (spouses, children, neighbors, even enemies). This is how we get our true needs met and transcend our self-absorbed whining and find salve for our self-inflicted wounds and even for those

inflicted upon us by a world full of fellow sinners. (See Matthew 10:39; Mark 8:35, 36; Philippians 2:3; Micah 6:8; and about a thousand other verses.) It is in loving God and others that we are transformed and changed. It is in valuing God as most valuable, above all other competing goods and gods, that we are satisfied!

“If our primary problem is sin and evil, then we must look to God for His solution, techniques, and methods.”

Ultimately, God and His grace are the only true agents of change. The post-modern world has no idea how helpless and hopeless it is. How can it understand disorders without first understanding the right order, described by the Designer Himself in holy writ? Within the church, familiarity breeds amnesia, and Christians are no longer gripped by the wisdom and power that comes to us through Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Scripture alone. Change that is worth anything is the result of a transaction between our dirty, deceptive, and broken hearts and the God who created and wants to redeem, sanctify, and change us. We are made by Him, like Him, for Him. If we define ourselves and our problems in God-related terms, we turn to and *depend* upon the God who created us and wants to change us, to His written Word as our counseling manual, and toward His Christ as our most wonderful counselor and friend, relying upon His sanctifying Spirit as our comforter. Christ and His cross are packed with power for change. Our Book is full of wisdom and know-how. Go to the Living Fountain and drink! Taste and see that the Lord is good and sufficient. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Gateway Biblical Counseling and Training Center Quarterly Newsletter*, Jan.-March, 2005

When Motherhood Became a Mountain

Name Withheld

I was hanging the last garment on the line when I heard the cry. It wasn't the usual sound of the baby waking too early from his nap, but the cry of a crow. The "Caw-caw-caw" carried on the air, tugging at my heart. It was the voice of a wild creature. A sigh escaped my lips and I thought of the verse from Psalm 55: "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then I would fly away, and be at rest."

The truth was evident to me. I did a fairly good job of hiding it, but still it remained stoutly there, like a firm splinter lodged beneath my skin. I wanted the painful intrusion to be only skin-deep so that it would work itself out.

I could no longer escape reality. I had to admit that I was tired—wary of my motherhood duties. The "what ifs" had crept in. I was tempted to think other people had a much easier life than I did. Whispers, no doubt from the Evil One, crossed my ears, reminding me how green the grass looked on the other side of the fence.

Ashamedly, I knew God was near. I just neglected to look up to Him, because it took effort. I realized He was with me, because I had so many blessings. I knew He would not give up on me, but still, discouragement had leaked into my heart. My failures loomed up before me and the physical workload overwhelmed me.

It had all begun with having many little ones over the years. No one had prepared me for the exhausting duties and the sleepless nights of motherhood. I was like a steam engine trying to run full blast at half steam. My emotions,

sometimes burst the boiler. I could not see through the dark tunnel I'd entered under this huge mountain.

I questioned my ability as a mother. Of course, I loved my little ones and they could bring joy to my heart. However, too often the cares of everyday living whisked away that mystical quality before I could enjoy it.

The more I tried and lost, the more overwhelmed I became. My physical and mental health were holding hands in this decline. During this unpleasant time, I sought to hide my illness within the four walls of my home. The cure was actually the root of my problem, thus a tiresome circle. If I was a failure, I didn't want others to know. I simply longed to escape my duties, to give up the fight, and be called to a better home in heaven.

My husband is not blind, nor is he coldhearted. He noticed that I was gradually wearing down. He tried to secure a maid for me, but our community was short on girls just then. Over a series of months we did manage to get help occasionally, but that was not a true solution. Even if their help was appreciated and lightened my workload, their presence made me shy and nervous.

My husband's patience should be inscribed on a golden plaque in a husband's Hall of Fame. He helped me all he could, giving me much-needed support. But the footwork was mine. How could I gain victory? I felt if my faith were greater, I could overcome the difficulties in my life. I battled with the thought that I was not much of a Christian,

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

because I prayed and there was no change. Why didn't God answer my prayers? And why weren't other mothers in the poor shape I was? What was wrong with me?

Then swallowing my pride and listening to some inner promptings, I went to our family doctor. I explained my troubles—the physical exhaustion, headaches, fears, and irrational emotions. I told him about my declining self-image and my evaporated confidence. He listened to my tale of woes, explained in simple language what was happening to me, and said I needed medication to help get things back in balance. It all seemed very easy, once I got to his office.

Then, as I began to think more logically, I tried to find time for more rest by simply turning a blind eye on things that I had thought before had to be done. I realized that my prayers needed to be laid before God in a different manner. I prayed for His will, but my request to be strong, courageous, and efficient were wrong. I needed to pray that all I suffered would bring glory to God, making me a willing servant through my weaknesses.

Longing to be at rest was like dodging the ball. There was still a duty for me to fulfill. I thought of the poem that reads:

*If I have craved for joys that are
not mine,
If I have let my wayward heart
repine,
Dwelling on things of earth, not
things divine;
Good Lord, forgive!*

*If I have been perverse or hard or
cold,
If I have longed for shelter in Thy
fold,
When Thou hast given me some
fort to hold;
Good Lord, forgive!*

Yes, I have “a fort to hold” each day as long as I draw breath. I had to see

beauty in some small way each day, whether in a flower or a poem or in edifying reading material, definitely in our Lord's Scripture.

Soon I began to see beauty in our household—the children's expressions, their hugs, stubby fingers, laughter, and story time. Truly God reveals when the heart is reduced to putty, and it may take extreme measures to do so. As I experienced healing, I longed to aid others by sharing a laugh or crying with their hurting hearts. Thank You, God!

Recently I saw a beautiful bird in flight. The clouds were thick and low, moving fast in a capricious wind. This aviator's vast wingspan held him aloft in the air current. I did not envy his freedom, only marveled at the magnificence of this great bird.

Then I couldn't help but chuckle to myself. If the bird were to land, it would prove to be nothing more than a lowly buzzard—a creature not very high on my list of favorites. Yet his ugly looks and reputation were of no detriment to him. Up high, soaring in the sky, he was as graceful and beautiful as any eagle. I could only marvel how even the seemingly lowest in nature could ascend with the grandest. It was a reminder that we humans are like that too. We all have potential.

It is as one minister encouraged, “Be of good courage. Don't faint nor tire, because if you quit, it will be for naught and of no profit. Hold fast and 'press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus'” (Philippians 3:14). ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Family Life*, March 2007





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

Be Still, My Soul



by von Schlegel/Sibelius

Lyrics:

Katharina Amalia Dorothea von Schlegel was a little-known poet from the 18th century. This particular hymn was originally published in 1752 in German, and was translated into English in 1855 by Jane Laurie Borthwick as part of a publication called "Hymns From the Land of Luther."

Although some sources of this text give as many as six verses, most stick with the three that are given in this arrangement from the *Mennonite Hymnal*. Since this hymn is generally known as only these three verses, this discussion will only focus on them.

The text itself is quite well-written, and focused primarily on the theme of Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God." The author's insistence on including the theme phrase "Be still, my soul" twice in every verse gives a sense of coherence and unity to the hymn, as well as serving to drive home the message of the hymn.

In addition to the effective and repetitive reference to Psalm 46, the verses are laid out in a thoughtful manner that merits consideration. The first verse talks about the present situation, and urges us to trust God with our "cross of grief or pain." It tells us that God will be faithful even in turbulent

times, and closes with a reference to the "joyful end" that we know is awaiting us. The second verse looks to history as proof of God's faithfulness, and assures us that He will "guide the future as He has the past." The author specifically refers to the storm at sea that Jesus conquered when He was here on earth. With the third verse, our focus is drawn to the future, and the poet elaborates on the "joyful end" from the end of verse one.

Music:

The music of this hymn comes from a patriotic tone poem by the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius. It was composed to be performed at a celebration of Finland's autonomy which was focused on resisting the impending Russian influence in the country. "Finlandia," as the piece was called, soon became a symbol of Finnish nationalism and a source of national pride.¹ The hymn tune that we know as "Finlandia" was only a small part of this large scale work for orchestra, and its function is to provide a quiet and contrasting relief from the more angry and turbulent music that makes up the surrounding portions of the piece. Although it was not composed specifically for this text, when we consider the

Be Still, My Soul

Catharina A. D. von Schlegel, 1752
Stille, mein Wille
 Tr. Jane Laurie Borthwick, 1855

From Jean Sibelius, 1899
 Arranged for *The Hymnal*, 1933 (Presbyterian)

1 Be still, my soul! the Lord is on thy side; Bear pa-tient - ly the
 2 Be still, my soul! thy God doth un - der - take To guide the fu - ture
 3 Be still, my soul! the hour is has-t'ning on When we shall be for -

cross of grief or pain; Leave to thy God to or - der and pro - vide,
 as He has the past. Thy hope, thy con - fi - dence, let noth - ing shake;
 ev - er with the Lord, When dis - ap - point - ment, grief, and fear are gone,

In ev - ery change He faith - ful will re - main. Be still, my soul! thy
 All now mys - te - rious shall be bright at last. Be still, my soul! the
 Sor - row for - got, love's pur - est joys re - stored. Be still, my soul! when

best, thy heav'n - ly Friend Through thorn - y ways leads to a joy - ful end.
 waves and winds still know His voice who ruled them while He dwelt be - low.
 change and tears are past. All safe and bless - ed we shall meet at last. A - men.

original function of this tune, it really fits the text quite splendidly. Our lives are often quite full of confusion and turbulence, and this hymn calls us to “be still,” and realize

that God is on our side, and that we have nothing to fear. ■

Endnotes

1. <http://virtual.finland.fi>.

Old-Fashioned Parents and Jet-Age Teenagers

by David W. Lehigh

The family car was all ready to go. The seventeen-year-old driver was behind the wheel, listening with impatience to his father's last instructions concerning speed, time for getting home, and places to avoid. Finally he said good-bye and the car was off. But as they went, the seventeen-year-old said to his companion, "Dad's still living in the Dark Ages."

The remark calls attention to a problem which is old, and yet is more acute at this present time than it has ever been before. More than three thousand years ago a father asked a heavenly visitor the question, "How shall we order the child?" (Judges 13:12). The generation gap has been a problem for years, in conversation, in cartoons, in magazine articles, etc.—one comes across repeated complaints like these: "You just can't reason with teenagers; they want their own way; they won't listen to advice; you can't talk sensibly with them." On the other hand, teenagers sometimes complain that parents are arbitrary and unsympathetic and that they are trying to force their children to follow the same pattern in which they grew up. Teens claim that times have changed, and they want to work out better ways of doing things.

It's true that in many things times have changed. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were no automobiles, no airplanes, and no radios or televisions. Electricity was not in general use, for the methods of transmitting high-voltage current had not been dis-

covered. Telephones were few, and generally used only locally, for the small independent companies that operated the local lines did not connect together. Farm crops were harvested with much handwork, and today's mass production techniques in industry were still in the future.

The achievements of men have changed, but the Word of God has never changed, and it never will. Jesus says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The principles of the Bible have stood the test of centuries, and they are still valid. The Bible contains a number of principles which apply to the controversy between parents and teenagers. Many are from the Book of Proverbs, written by Solomon, but inspired by the Holy Spirit.

1. Instructions to Parents

First: Careful and purposeful child-training is needed. The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). This is much more than a command to use the rod of correction. "Train up" means careful teaching and guidance. It corresponds to the instruction in Ephesians 6:4, "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The best teaching has always been a consistent example. The alert parent will find many opportunities to clinch a lesson. A boy of six, for example, was rejoicing in his

newly learned ability to read. He happened to discover that the family's maid could not do this. He ran into his father's study, crying, "Daddy, did you know the maid can't read, and she's ever so much older than I am?" His father picked up a book and opened it. "Here," he said, "can you read this?" The little boy stood dumbfounded. The book was written in Chinese. In telling the story many years later, he added, "Whenever I am tempted to despise the ignorance of someone else, I remember my father's lesson: I cannot read Chinese."

Second: Begin child-training early. The Bible says, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Proverbs 19:18). One who trains a dog must insist on obedience, or his training will be unsuccessful. Training a child is much the same, but with this difference: While we train the dog so that he may please us, we train the child to know what is best for his own good and happiness. For this reason the training of a child is so very important. Children do not belong to us. God only lends them to us, and He can take them back at any time.

Third: Don't be so busy that you have no time for the companionship and training of your children. It is true that these are busy days. Children are perceptive. If the family is struggling against difficult odds to make ends meet, they will realize it, and cooperate. But if they sense that the parents are more interested in making money than they are in their own children, the children are likely to become bitter about it. One of the most common complaints made by teenagers in writing to counselors is that their parents are too much concerned with making money to be companions to them.

Fourth: Keep a cheerful attitude and a sense of humor. We do not mean to encourage foolish jesting, which is condemned in the Bible, but the wise man

said (Proverbs 17:22), "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." The child whose parents are able to laugh in the face of irritations and disappointments has a priceless heritage. When the one-year-old pulls the cupboard door open and gets plastered with molasses, a cleaning job is called for—but it will go better all around, if Mother can laugh a little at the sticky-faced child.

Finally: Be honest with your children. If you make a promise, keep it faithfully. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Proverbs 13:12). One is reminded of a quick-tempered mother who promised her boy a piece of candy for being quiet. When he reminded her, she snapped, "Didn't I promise you the candy for keeping still?" She said, "The longer you keep still, the sooner you'll get it!" Parents should never deal with a child on such an illogical basis.

2. Instructions to Teenagers

First: Remember that you must account for the way in which you spend your youth. Just as truly as parents need to remember that children are only lent from God, so young people need to remember that youth, that priceless irreplaceable gift, is only given conditionally, and must be accounted for. Young folks often say, "I want to live my life my own way." But the Bible says, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). Whatever you sow, you will have to reap some day.

Second: Give respectful consideration to what your parents say. Proverbs 1:8 says, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." You may feel that you know better than they. It is possible that you do. But remember this, they have

been over the road that you are traveling, and they have brought you up to be what you are. You can learn from them, even if only to avoid some of the mistakes they may have made. Treat them with respect and consider their advice carefully.

Third: Consider your company with care. The Bible says, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, . . . walk not thou in the way with them" (Proverbs 1:10, 11, 15). It is important that you choose your company from those who are not infected with the spirit of wanting something without earning it by honest work. Some say, "Only dull people work hard. Smart ones find easier ways to get a livelihood." Sometimes people envy the worker who through greater skill and acceptance of more responsibility, is better paid than they are. But don't forget that the skill required years of work to acquire, and responsibility is entrusted only to those who have demonstrated an ability to handle it well. God told Adam that he must eat his bread in the sweat of his face, and this has never been changed.

Fourth: Young people (both boys and girls) should consider the Bible's standard for ideal womanhood. This is most beautifully set forth in Proverbs 31:10-31. Open your Bible to that passage, and notice the qualities which are recommended for ideal womanhood (and many of these are just as needful for the men):

(1) Loyalty (verse 11). The Scripture implies that loyalty and trustworthiness are of more value than wealth.

(2) Skill in homemaking (verses 13, 19, 22, 27). Many girls today make light of domestic knowledge. They are constantly being urged to try and make themselves physically attractive in order to secure the attention of the opposite sex. But without skill in homemaking and the graces of good character, it will be difficult to maintain a happy home.

(3) Carefulness and orderliness (verse 27). Orderly habits can be cultivated. Lack of order in the home has disgusted many a good husband and caused his affection for his wife to cool. We should also add that a slovenly and disorderly husband adds to the burden of his wife's duties and can scarcely help but lessen her respect for him.

(4) Generosity (verse 20). This is the crown of womanliness as well as Christian character.

(5) Wisdom and kindness in speech (verse 26). A sharp tongue spoils an otherwise admirable person.

(6) Verse 30 says that "favor," by which we mean "social prestige," is deceitful. It usually leads to envy and excess in display. A wise young person will not be anxious to secure it. The same verse also says that beauty is vain. The Bible holds high regard for beauty when worn as a crown for virtue (as its statements concerning the beauty of Rebekah and Rachel clearly show), but beauty alone is of no value. Our commercial and educational systems today often tend to encourage and exploit beauty of body at the expense of beauty of character.

All the qualities named above do not change, and so to summarize the whole matter, we would simply say that things have changed very much since our parents were teenagers, people have changed very little, and God has not changed at all. We do many things differently from the way they were done in the days of our parents, but the principles and qualities which bring happiness and peace and satisfaction in life, have never changed. The principles that brought success and happiness to our parents will do the same for us. ■

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Sermon of the Month



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

Five Minutes After I Die

by Norman Lewis

“It is appointed unto men once to die” — Hebrews 9:27.

That is what the Bible declares, and it is a truth most of us would have sense enough to recognize, even if the Bible said nothing about it.

But what is death? What happens after a person dies? The answer need not perplex us.

Let us go back to the beginning of human history. There in the Garden of Eden we see a representative man and woman. They are in a delightful place; the environment is perfect. Adam and Eve have healthful, enjoyable work for their hands to do; and through vital fellowship with the living God, their spirits are satisfied.

Only one thing was prohibited to the man. That restriction was not placed upon him to trouble him needlessly, and certainly not to cause his fall. Rather, it was a necessary means to prove whether his love and obedience to God were genuine. The Lord pointed out to man the fruit of a certain tree with the warning word, “The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

The Devil, not long after, came to the woman and insinuated a lie: “Ye shall not surely die.” Eve believed the Devil, disbelieved God, and with Adam ate of the fruit.

God came down, the sin was exposed, and sentence was pronounced on the guilty pair just as the Lord had promised from the

beginning. “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

But we ask, What really happened? We do not see Adam and Eve stricken to earth in physical death; much less did they disappear into nothingness, which some misguided folks nowadays say is what happens at death.

What did happen immediately, however, is that the guilty pair was driven out from the presence of the Lord. By that act, spiritual death was clearly defined as separation from God.

From that day forward, all human beings living in any other experience than that of personal fellowship with God have been spiritually dead.

With the fact clearly before us that spiritual death means separation of the soul from God, it is not difficult to understand that physical death also means separation—separation of the living personality from the body or “house” in which the real man dwells.

That is what the Apostle Paul is talking about when he says, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Paul tells us plainly that our body is just

a temporary dwelling place for us; and that when our body finally crumbles in death, we, the living person, must depart into another world.

That experience will come to every person in this world unless the coming of Jesus prevents it. Therefore, every one of us has a legitimate cause to be interested in these facts.

Be sensible enough to recognize that your going may be sudden. Even if you could be sure of having a few days on a hospital bed before death, it would be a wretched choice to postpone the great issues of your soul until that time.

It has been my painful duty to watch people die without Christ, and I declared I would never watch another unsaved person die if I could avoid it.

The man was right who said, "The Bible has one case of deathbed repentance in order that none need despair, but it has only one in order that none may presume." The man who thinks to burn the whole candle of his life in sin, then blow the smoke in God's face by a deathbed repentance in order to escape Hell, is almost sure to find too late that he has been deceived; for the Bible says, "God is not mocked."

Suppose You Die Suddenly!

And if you die suddenly, what then?

Grafton Harpell was a classmate of mine at college. His unusual talents and splendid character gave sure indications of a bright future for his life.

One Sunday night after attending church, he talked with some friends and then went for a brief walk alone. He was found face down on the sidewalk by the police about 10:20 p.m.—a cerebral hemorrhage. There was no sickness, no infirmity, no warning. One minute he was here; the next, he was in another world.

Are you ready for that minute?

Loved ones will weep o'er my silent face;
Dear ones will clasp me in sad embrace;
Shadows and darkness will fill the place
Five minutes after I die.

Faces that sorrow I will not see;
Voices that murmur will not reach me.
But where, oh, where will my spirit be
Five minutes after I die.

There is not much difference in the long run whether you have only eight minutes still to live or eighty years. A whole life at best is only a short span between two eternities, so brief that the Bible says a man's years are as a "tale that is told."

It makes sense to look ahead, to think. When you leave this world, you will go out a Christian or a Christ-rejecter. There are just two ways to die; just two roads lie ahead.

Only a Christian Can Welcome the Hour of Death!

Only a Christian in all this world of trouble can say with the Apostle Paul, "... having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Philippians 1:23).

The reason for Paul's wonderful confidence is not hard to find. The Christian, as a human being, knows this world in which he lives. Unsaved people also know this world, but the Christian has something more. Through the Bible's plain message and his own experience with Christ, he also knows a lot about the wonderful world to which he will go when he leaves this life.

That is why Paul could say, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). That is death for the Christian: absent from the body but present with the Lord—"with Christ; which is far better."

The Unsaved Die Too!

What about the unsaved person? What happens when he dies? For him the facts are just as plain, but awfully sad!

Our Lord Jesus Christ reports the death of a certain rich man. He tells how the man died, was buried, "and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments."

Remember, lost person, the same tender lips that pleaded from the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," also described the pleas of a lost man

in Hell: "Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

Does it not move you to think that the Lord who died to save us from that awful fate here warns us of its horror? Jesus says the rich man was *tormented* in hell. He says that the man *suffered* for want of a drop of water and that he was in *flames*.

Friends, you may do as you will; but for my part, I take the whole word of Jesus Christ as very truth and pray God to help me tell it out to all men in saving power.

Is it sensible to turn a deaf ear to Christ? Surely not. A man is not smart who will live for one world alone.

Don't Be a Fool!

Some years ago a banker in Lincoln, Nebraska, built himself a palatial home. The architect provided every comfort money could buy. Fourteen rooms had fireplaces. Every fixture and furnishing was magnificent.

A friend of my father was invited to look through the house. Admiring its beauty and elegance, the visitor was amazed. He said, "You certainly have a marvelous house here. You have omitted absolutely nothing of beauty or convenience or luxury."

The owner replied, "Yes, it's a fine house, but I did forget one thing."

"And what is that?"

"Well," he continued, "I should have built a bird cage near the front door."

"A bird cage? I don't understand."

"Yes," came the bitter reply, "I should have built a cage near the front door for a parrot and taught him to say every time I went in or out, 'You are an absolute fool. You are an absolute fool.'"

He was a prominent and wealthy banker, but those words were his estimate of himself as he neared the close of life.

"Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:

"But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me,

that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:23, 24).

Don't live for one world only. Take Jesus Christ into your heart and life; He will guide you and give you power to live triumphantly. You can know God now, and you can be sure of being with Him through a glorious eternity. Any other choice makes death, as the infidel said, "a leap in the dark."

The story is widely told, and rightly so, of an ancient king and his court jester. The buffoon captivated the fancy of his monarch in such a way that he was presented by the king with an elegant baton and the instructions, "You are to keep this rod until you find a man more foolish than yourself."

Time passed, and the king fell sick. The jester was called in and found his monarch in great agony. "What is the trouble?" he asked.

"Oh," said the king, "I feel very ill and fear I am about to go on a long journey."

"When will you return?" asked the jester.

"Never," said the king.

"What do you know about the country to which you are going?"

"Nothing."

"What preparation have you made for the journey?"

"None."

Solemnly the jester extended the elegant baton. "Your Excellency," he began, "you told me to keep this rod until I found a man more foolish than myself. You have just told me you are about to take a trip from which you will never return, to a country about which you know nothing, on a journey for which you have made no preparation. I must give you the rod."

No man needs to be like that king. The Bible plainly tells us what to expect and how to prepare for the journey ahead. For one thing, you can mark down that

You Won't Go to Sleep

The Apostle Paul talked about death and made it very clear he did not look forward

to taking a nap. When Paul talks with enthusiasm about his desire “to depart, and be with Christ; which is far better,” there is not the faintest suggestion he is talking about a gentle slumber.

Nor do the unsaved dead “sleep.” The rich man who died without Christ did not “rest in peace.” When cowardly, timeserving preachers today use that kind of pompous language in a funeral sermon about a person they well know has died giving no evidence of personal faith in Christ, it is but empty prating with no Bible basis. God’s Book says, “The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.”

The idea that the soul sleeps after death belongs to several false doctrines, yet the truth of the matter is one of the simplest things the Bible reveals. When in the New Testament the word *sleep* is used in connection with death, it always refers to the bodies of Christians. God from the beginning of time has decreed that at death “the dust [shall] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The Bible plainly tells us that after death the body sleeps in the silent dust until at the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is called forth from the tomb unto judgment.

You Won’t Have Another Chance

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” — 2 Corinthians 6:2.

You are setting your course for eternity here. What you do here and now about God’s offer of pardon will determine your eternal destiny.

Pontius Pilate put the great question of all the ages before men when he said, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” (Matthew 27:22).

You may make a mistake about a thousand other things with little loss, but don’t make a mistake about Jesus Christ. If death catches you in that error, you will never have another chance.

Wise Solomon said, “If the clouds be full

of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be” (Ecclesiastes 11:3). There is nothing so unwise as to think you can scoff at God’s grace here and afterward find your way into Heaven.

Oh, that the words of Abraham to the rich man in Hell might burn in the heart of every unsaved soul! “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime. . . .” It is here and now that every man is asked to open his heart to Jesus Christ and let the King of Glory enter in.

Oh, what a fool—hard the word but true—

Passing the Saviour with death in view,
Doing a deed I can ne’er undo
Five minutes after I die.

If I am flinging a fortune away,
If I am wasting salvation’s day,
“Just is my sentence,” my soul shall say
Five minutes after I die.

It is great mercy from God that offers man salvation now and

Glory By and By

No mortal pen has ever written words to reach the Christian’s heart like those of Jesus:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” —John 14:1-3.

How many thousands of souls with the comfort of that promise have closed their eyes on scenes of this world to open them in the City of Light in the presence of the Lord!

I remember reading of a retired millionaire who had three daughters. The daughters were grown and already had homes of their own when the father decided to build a more wonderful mansion.

He first built a magnificent home for himself and his wife, but he didn't stop with that. Into the one great mansion he built three other lovely homes, separate and distinct, each luxuriously furnished. Then, calling his daughters, he gave to each two keys with these words:

The first is the key to the outside door of your father's house, and second is the key to your own home within your father's house. Your home will always be kept ready; and whenever you come to the city, you will always live in your father's house but in your own mansion.

I like that story. Does it not speak of the glorious mansions within the Father's house which Jesus has been preparing throughout the two thousand years since He returned to Heaven?

On October 21, 1934, I accepted Him as my Saviour and Lord, and He has promised me by His grace the enjoyment of a heavenly home. Who can tell me what it will be to dwell in that heavenly land with my dearest friends who have loved and served Christ? There, together, we will serve and enjoy Him forever.

Some of us who have experienced painful human partings are looking forward to a great meeting over there.

Five years have rolled away since I last gripped my father's hand and looked into his fine face and clear eyes as he swung aboard the train which was to take him to New York, then on to Africa by boat on a mission of mercy for the Lord Jesus.

Shortly afterward, our King's command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," moved me away from the United States to work for Jesus in far-off Argentina.

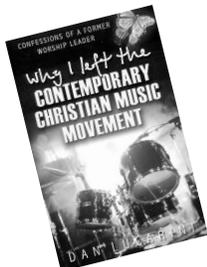
Mind you, I love my dad. No father and son ever had closer fellowship or enjoyed each other more than we have through the years. It was not easy for me to think he may close his eyes on this world before I see him again.

But I am not sad, nor am I asking for sympathy. I have the promise of Jesus: "I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also."

Jesus has prepared us an eternal home where we will be together always. You had better open your heart to Jesus right now and, as the old hymn says, "Come and go with me to my Father's house where the many mansions be." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Sword of the Lord*, November 17, 2006

Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement



by Dan Lucarini

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Disobedience or Misunderstanding

by Elvin Kauffman

“Paul, would you please take these beef bones to the back of the barn for the dog?” Mother requested as the family left the dinner table. A short while later, when Mother walked to the garden, she was surprised and disappointed to find the remains of the beef bones by the side of the walk.

At times such as this, numerous questions arise in a parent’s mind. The responsibility to determine between disobedience and misunderstanding becomes a reality.

Why must parents determine between disobedience or misunderstanding? God has given parents the solemn responsibility of child rearing. The children of Israel were commanded to teach their children diligently (Deuteronomy 6:7). Fathers are commissioned to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). When training children in the way that they should go, parents often need to determine whether a wrong response was a deliberate choice to disobey or the result of a failure in communication.

Disobedience and misunderstanding may seem quite similar to many people. But wise parents understand that these responses differ sharply, and each calls for a different parental response. Disobedience is a failure to carry out instruction or commands. Misunderstanding is the failure to fully grasp the nature, significance, or explanation of instruction.

How can parents determine between disobedience or misunderstanding? The account of Samuel relating to Saul’s disobedience (1 Samuel 15) gives us some pointers on how to determine between disobedience or misunderstanding in our children.

“Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning.” When questions arise about whether the child disobeyed or misunder-

stood, parents should promptly address the matter. Delayed confrontation usually increases difficulty in determining. Paul, in the opening illustration, should be able to repeat Mother’s request and give an explanation why he emptied the beef bones by the walk, instead of taking them to the barn.

Samuel could easily understand that Saul’s declaration of performing the commandment of the Lord was not truthful because the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen proved otherwise. Sometimes determining disobedience or misunderstanding is easy because the evidence is clear.

For example, Paul may quickly admit that he knew what Mother had requested, but he was in a hurry to finish so he could ride bicycle. On the other hand, he may say that he misunderstood and thought that Mother said backyard instead of the back of the barn.

Claiming misunderstanding presents the need for parents to determine the truthfulness of the child. Samuel already knew the truth because the Lord had revealed it to him. But how can parents determine the truth in these situations? Breathing a prayer for wisdom should be one of the first things parents do in their effort to determine this difference in their child.

Samuel challenged Saul on the declaration of fulfilling the commandment of the Lord. Parents will need to cross-question the child to determine if there actually was a misunderstanding. They must remember that all children have tendencies native to human nature. Just like Saul, they may try to answer in a way that places themselves in a favorable light. If Paul was asked whether he had finished his job, he might answer, “Yes, and I brought the dish back to the house.”

Another tendency of children is to blame someone else or make excuse when they are confronted with their disobedience. Paul might excuse himself by saying his brother needed his help, so he gave the bones to the dog where the dog met him. Saul, too, blamed the people for taking the best of the animals for sacrifice.

Saul seemed to think that his way was best or at least acceptable. Sometimes this is the root of a child's disobedience. Paul may have seen little use in going the whole way to the barn when the dog could chew on bones by the walk.

Another human tendency that children sometimes express is hearing only what they want to hear. In response to Mother's question, Paul might answer, "I didn't hear where you said to take the bones."

How should parents respond after they have determined between disobedience or misunderstanding?

When parents conclude that the offense was disobedience, they will need to punish the child. Saul's disobedience cost him the kingdom and his relationship with God. Children must learn that disobedience brings severe consequences. God did not remove the consequences because Saul admitted his failure. Parents are thankful when the child admits his mistake, but they must be careful to carry out the punishment that the offense merits.

Does misunderstanding release a child from responsibility? Parents need to be discerning of the child's capabilities, as well as their natural tendencies. Was Paul capable of carrying the bones to the barn? Does Paul have a chronic problem of not hearing when directions are given? Does Paul have a high opinion of his own ideas and ways of doing things? Maybe he does not pay attention to details when direction is given. Sometimes parents must help their children to understand by giving "misunderstanding" its due reward.

What can parents do to avoid situations where determining is difficult?

Vague directions frustrate children. Parents should try to give clear, concise direction.

Paul had no excuse for not understanding Mother's instruction. Parents should not assume that children know what to do and how to obey without giving careful direction.

Parents can avoid difficulty in determining between disobedience and misunderstanding by making sure the child is listening when direction is given. If Paul grabs the bone dish and runs out the door before Mother is finished talking, the likelihood of not carrying out the command in detail is greatly increased. Or maybe Paul does not look up from his book when Mother is talking. Again, he likely has not heard the details of Mother's command. Parents should require a response when the child's name is called and insist on eye contact while direction is being given. When there is a question if proper attention was given, ask the child to repeat the request.

Parents can avoid difficulty in determining between disobedience and misunderstanding by carefully investing responsibility according to capability. Seven-year-old Paul was easily capable of understanding and fulfilling Mother's request. Children experience frustration if given a responsibility beyond their capability.

What goals do parents have in determining between disobedience and misunderstanding?

Determining between these responses is an effort to teach children responsibility. Solomon lamented the vanity of leaving all his labor to the man that would come after him, not knowing if he would be a wise man or a fool (Ecclesiastes 2:18, 19). Christian parents teach their children to be responsible individuals, to grow up capable of managing in Father and Mother's absence, and to be of service in the kingdom of God.

Parents determine between disobedience or misunderstanding to teach children dependability. The child that habitually misunderstands is really no more dependable than the child who disobeys. While disobedience may have more serious consequences, parents must identify and deal with both expressions to teach their children to be dependable individuals

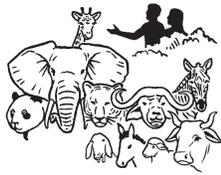
and faithful servants in the heavenly kingdom.

Parents determine between disobedience or misunderstanding to teach accountability. Children develop concepts of personal accountability to God according to the degree of accountability that parents require of them.

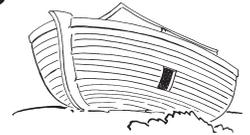
As Christian parents consistently deter-

mine between disobedience or misunderstanding, they will find the rest, delight, and honor that God promises for faithful parenting (Proverbs 29:15, 17). And their children will rise up to bless them and honor their God. ■

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Beginning Issues



Genetic Mutations

by John Mullett

In the last article I talked about natural selection being one of the mechanisms championed by evolutionists as one of the driving forces behind biological evolution. In this month's article I'd like to take a look at a second mechanism considered to be key in the evolutionary process. While it is left to natural selection to select for traits most favorable, as has been shown, it fails to give an increase in genetic information. So evolutionists look to genetic mutations to provide a solution for a mechanism that can give rise to new information powered only by natural processes.

While genetic mutations have been observed to alter and at times even give rise to new traits (like an extra set of wings to a fruit fly¹) it has never been observed to give rise to new genetic information. In the aforementioned fruit fly the information for wings was there

all along; the emergence of the trait was triggered either by the rearranging of the information or by a switching on/off of certain genetic switches. In the case of new traits and new information there is a vast difference between the two. Just because we see a new trait emerge it does not mean new genetic information has arisen. New information would constitute of, say, building a complete eye where no eye was ever present in the first place. It has been argued that mutations are sometimes beneficial such as beetles losing their wings on a windy island. However beneficial it may be (they now can't fly and consequently won't get blown into the ocean) it still represents a loss of information (the ability to fly/grow wings). What if they were put into an environment where they needed the wings again? Unless there were beetles in their population that still

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

had information for wings, and without any intervention from outside their population, that group of beetles would not fly again. Genetic mutations have never been observed to give rise to new information at the genetic level. In fact, they always represent the exact opposite. The following quote by Dr. Werner Gitt includes genetic mutations in its scope of reference: "There is no known natural law through which matter can give rise to information, neither is any physical process or material phenomenon known that can do this."² The statement by Dr. Gitt sums it up well.

In an article titled "A New Beginning—Darwin Revisionism Goes Mainstream" (September issue of *The American Spectator*, pages 16 and 17) Tom Bethell refers to *Darwin's Black Box* by Michael Behe and his examination of some of the complex biochemical systems, such as the biochemistry of vision, asks the question: "How did they get here?" He then quotes, "Since the 1850s the answer has been unchanging: bit by bit. By 'numerous, successive, slight

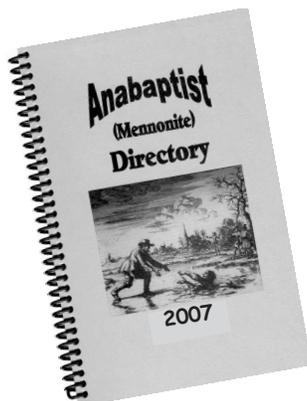
modifications,' as Charles Darwin put it. One part fortuitously appeared by random mutation, and this conferred a 'selective advantage' upon the organism. Then there was another accident, and so on. But this won't work if all the parts have to be present and correct from the beginning. And they do. Believing the Darwin explanation is like believing that a piston rod will make a car run a little bit, and then, if you connect it to a crank shaft, it will run a little bit better. Finally, when all the parts are in place, it will get 40 miles to the gallon."³ Friends, it simply doesn't work. ■

ENDNOTES

1. *Argument: Some Mutations Are Beneficial* by Jonathan Sarfati with Michael Matthews found at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/re2/chapter5.asp>.
2. W. Gitt, *In the Beginning Was Information*, CLV, Bielenfeld, Germany, p. 79.
3. 'A New Beginning' by Tom Bethell, *The American Spectator*—September issue pgs. 16, 17. Article also found at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs/1245.asp>.

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A Christian Vision of Beauty

Part 2

by R. Albert Mohler Jr.

The Christian vision of beauty 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.

Let me follow through with three basic implications of the Christian vision of truth and beauty. First, the Christian vision of beauty explains why the world is beautiful, but not quite. We are often struck by the beauty of the created order, and this feeling is validated for us in Genesis 1, where the Creator's own verdict is that the creation is good. The goodness of creation is therefore non-negotiable, and again the unity of the transcendentals reminds us that if it is good, then it is also necessarily true, and real, and beautiful. Thus our metaphysic and our aesthetic, our understanding of truth and our evaluation of ethics, all come together in creation. The creation as God made it was good and beautiful and true and real.

But of course, we then must proceed to Genesis 3, where we learn that the disruption and confusion over beauty—the corruption of the very concept of beauty—is not derived from a mere fault in human perception; it is rather a matter of human rebellion. Genesis 3 is a picture of the beautiful denied, of the real, the good, and the true rejected in favor

of mankind's desire to be as God.

The cosmic effect of Adam's fall extended even to the natural world, so that what once could tell only the truth now tells lies. In verse 6, we read: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and she ate, and she gave also to her husband with her and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were open, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings."

Thus we are warned that that which is a delight to the eyes may very well be unbeautiful. Our human temptation is to substitute the truly beautiful for that which is merely a delight to our senses and a delight to our eyes, and thus we also are drawn to the forbidden fruit of a corrupt and fallen culture.

Verse 7 teaches that once Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their eyes were opened. Following the mentality of the Enlightenment, this would appear not to be a Fall at all, but a rise. After all, a human capacity that had been absent is now present. Eyes that have been able to see only the beautiful have been opened, but that opening leads not to enlightenment, but to confusion and corruption. Their eyes were opened, and the first thing they saw is that they were naked. That which had only been seen as beautiful and good and true now became a thing of embarrassment and shame. So Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together and

made themselves loin coverings.

The Creator's verdict upon sin is made clear in the remainder of Genesis 3, and we see again that there are cosmic consequences. The ground itself will demonstrate the effects of the Fall. In verse 22, we find: "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil. And now, he might stretch out his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and eat and live forever.' Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the Garden of Eden to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out, and at the east of the Garden of Eden, He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword, which turned every direction to guard the way to the Tree of Life." Because of sin, the earth would now become hostile. That which had willingly yielded its fruit must now be cultivated. By the sweat of the brow, the man would have to work the field, even as the pains of childbirth would also now demonstrate the effect of the Fall in the woman herself.

So in Genesis 1, we have the perfection of God's created order—the unity of the transcendentals. Now, however, the unity of the good, the beautiful, the true, and the real has been sundered, and thus we are plunged into confusion and rebellion. Yet even still, the world is beautiful—though not quite. In other words, there is a vestigial beauty in creation that calls out to all concerning the reality of God. This is reflected, of course, throughout the Psalms, where we are reminded that the heavens tell the glories of God. The firmament, the seas, the crawling and creeping things—all of them cry forth the wonder, the reality, and the goodness of the Creator.

Despite this, however, human beings are given to corrupting even this expression of beauty. For one thing, it is all too easy to worship the creation rather than the Creator. We can very quickly look at the creation and think that it is beautiful in itself, rather than having been

made beautiful by the One who alone is beautiful. We can begin to look at the human creature as beautiful in and of himself, rather than beautiful because he or she is made in the image of God. Thus we adopt and bring into the very center of our hearts a corrupted understanding of beauty that bears more signs of the Fall than of the common grace that allows us—even as fallen creatures—to see this beauty.

There is another problem, of course, with the beauty of creation: It often lies. In the oceans, there is a fish known as the lionfish. It is incredibly beautiful—and venomous. In the Amazon jungles, there are many frogs, some a beautiful verdant green, some almost unimaginably purple, some almost iridescently yellow—and all deadly, such that the aboriginal peoples in those places would often use the fluid on the skin of these animals to poison their darts. That which looks beautiful to the eyes can kill, and thus we have learned not to trust our apprehension of beauty.

All this confusion about the created world is a symptom of our fallenness, but it is not just human beings that are affected by sin, by the severing of the good, the beautiful, the true, and the real. Creation as a whole finds itself groaning because of human sin. In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul speaks of God's work of redemption in all of its comprehensive glory, including creation itself. He writes: "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now, and not only this, but we also ourselves, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting

eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”

The work of redemption has cosmic significance. That which has been corrupted by sin is to be restored, but even now in this age, we are to see it and understand it as groaning, anxiously awaiting the revelation of the sons of God.

In Revelation 21, we have the end of the story, and even as we began with a perfect creation, we have here the promise of a new heaven and a new earth. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will be no longer any death; there will no longer be any mourning or crying or pain; the first things have passed away.’ And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’ Then He said to me, ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and He will be My son.’ ”

Beginning in verse 10, John writes about the new Jerusalem: “And He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city of Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which were

the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.”

The beauty of the new Jerusalem is reflected in language about precious and semi-precious stones. The streets are said to be made of gold. All this has been turned into the stuff of gospel music, but the picture is much more of beauty than of opulence. It is meant to cause us to think about what a redeemed city would actually be, how it would appear. This is creation reset, a new heaven and a new earth, and now a new Jerusalem. Thus we have the completion of God’s redeeming work, and it comes with the revelation not only of the sons of God, but of the Son of God, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, who after all was the firstborn of all creation, the One through whom all the worlds were made, and the Logos who was the very instrument of the creation itself.

So the Christian worldview explains to us why the world is beautiful—but not quite. As the Psalmist says, the world indeed tells forth the glory of God, but it does so in fallenness. The world contains things of prettiness that are deadly, and the inclination of human beings is to worship the creature and the creation rather than the Creator. The world is now groaning under the effect of sin and the wrath and judgment of God. That explains a great deal to us, including natural evil—hurricanes and earthquakes and tsunamis, venomous fish and poisonous plants. Yet it was not always so, and it will not always be so. Scripture points us toward the restoration of all things. The Christian understanding of beauty is an eschatological view, one that looks forward to the unveiling of true beauty, which will come on the day of the Lord when the Alpha and the Omega will be seen as the beautiful One. ■

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LEGAL OR LEGALIST

by E. O. Jack Jones

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous” – 1 John 5:2, 3

This issue was addressed by the Supreme Court Justice who, when he made a point of law to his fellow justices, was chastised by one of them who said, “Is not that rather legalistic?” His reply was, “The word, sir, is legal!” *Legalist* has a pejorative meaning and we reject it as descriptive of earnest Christians.

If you believe the Bible means what it says and live and teach it, you will be called a legalist by those who deplore hindrance to their creative interpretations. Worldly people admonish us to remember that while man looks on the outward appearance, God looks at the heart. “God knows my heart.” Of course He does and judges the inward motives of the heart. But in 1 John 5:3 we read: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” Saved people do not find any of His commandments grievous for they love to please their Saviour.

The holiness liberals dismiss the relevant passages by saying that they are “culturally

conditioned.” This is to say it was true then but not now. We recognize this as the American Philosophy of Pragmatism advanced by William James. He believed truth changes from generation to generation and from location to location. It may have been true at one time but is no longer because it is culturally conditioned. We reject that philosophy and the resultant theology. Is our culture so good that it needs no correction? Conditions today are similar to those in the first century.

The differences in the ranks of the Arminian-Wesleyan discipline surfaces when those who believe the Bible standards of holy living are essential to the Christian life are challenged by those who would like to remove some of them. What about those things we have been taught all our lives, but are not specifically mentioned in the Bible? There are variations from one to another of our churches, but we all look back to the “Rules of the Society Bands” of John Wesley. One can still read them in the discipline of the United Methodist Church.

RULES OF THE METHODIST SOCIETIES

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies—“a desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins.” But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they shall continue to evidence their desire of salvation.

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as:

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning of the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling.

Drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, except in cases of extreme necessity.

Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves.

Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for

evil, or railing for railing; the using of many words in buying or selling.
 The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.
 The giving or taking of things on usury—that is, unlawful interest.
 Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or ministers.
 Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.
 Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as:
 The putting on of gold and costly apparel.
 The taking of such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.
 The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.
 Softness and needless self-indulgence.
 Laying up treasure on earth.
 Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

Second: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:
 To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison;
 To their souls by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all we have any conversation with . . .
 By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith . . .

Third: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are:
 The public worship of God.
 The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.
 The Supper of the Lord.
 Family and private prayers.
 Searching the Scriptures.
 Fasting or abstinence.

. . . All these we know His Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observes them not, who habitually breaks any of them, let it be known unto them . . . if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.

But where did Wesley receive such beliefs concerning the living of a holy life? In the lower level of the City Road Wesley Chapel, his home preaching church, there is a history of Wesley's spiritual life. He had enjoyed dancing, and it was shortly after his conversion that he felt checked by the Holy Spirit. Believing the practice to be unsuitable for a Christian he gave it up.

He had enjoyed playing cards; but again the Holy Spirit reproved him, and he gave it up. He had attended the theater, but was once more restrained by God and ended his theater life. He was an ale drinker, but the time came when he knew by the Spirit that it was not a behavior becoming to Chris-

tians, so this ended too. It is like a spiritual history of the man; step by step the Spirit led him to holy living.

The Holy Club at Oxford University made certain demands on its members. They were urged to follow these directions: **You are supposed to have the faith that "overcometh the world." To you, therefore, it is not grievous,—**

I. Carefully to abstain from doing evil; in particular,—

1. Neither to buy nor sell anything at all on the Lord's day.
2. To taste no spirituous liquor, no dram of any kind, unless prescribed by a physician.