

# The SWORD and TRUMPET



“Blow ye the Trumpet and warn the People.”

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.”

“Take the Sword of the Spirit which is The Word of God.”

*Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I*

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

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nothingness.

Spiritually, we are likewise assured that He enlightens “every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). That is, even those born in some heathen home and those who may spend all their lives without ever hearing of Christ, have been given some spiritual light (in nature, in conscience, in history, etc.) so that if they respond positively to the light they have, will then somehow be given more and more light, eventually enough to be saved. The classic Biblical example is the Roman Cornelius, to whom God eventually sent Peter with the full message of salvation through Christ. As Peter said at that time: “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34, 35).

The warning, however, is that those who do not respond to whatever light they have are “without excuse” and thus will “die in [their] sins” (Rom. 1:20; John 8:24), because they do not believe on Christ. And the tragedy is that “light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Nevertheless, “the eyes of the LORD run to

and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2 Chron. 16:9). After all, God does desire everyone “to be saved” (1 Tim. 2:4), and to “turn them from darkness to light” (Acts 26:18), but they will not come.

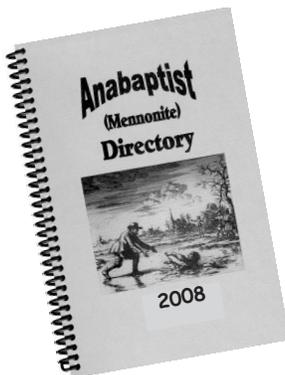
#### ***Passing Heaven’s Torch***

Jesus also said to His disciples (including us!): “Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14), obviously here referring just to spiritual light. Thus, since He is no longer here in the flesh, His enlightening ministry is to be mediated through us, passing His torch, as it were, to us. “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21).

Our mission and challenge, therefore—as those who know the Lord Jesus as both Creator and Saviour—is to “shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life” (Phil. 2:15, 16). “For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). ■

—Henry M. Morris, “The Light of the World,” *Acts & Facts* 31, no. 9 (Sept. 2002). Reprinted with permission from *Institute for Creation Research*.

## **Anabaptist (Mennonite) Directory 2008**



Approximately 124 pages, listing churches and ministers not found in other major directories. Based on adherence to an accepted doctrinal standard—Schleitheim, Dortrecht, 1921, 1963 or comparative.

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# Person of the Month:

## *Edward M. Bounds*

(1835-1913)



Edward McKendree Bounds was born August 15, 1835, in Shelbyville, Missouri.

In 1853, at the age of eighteen, he trained and apprenticed for three years as a lawyer but in his early twenties he felt the call of God to the ministry. In 1859, at the age of 24, he was ordained into the Methodist Episcopal denomination and served his first pastorate at the Monticello Methodist Church in Monticello, Missouri.

The Civil War intervened in 1861 and Edward was called into the Confederate States Army as a chaplain. During the first battle of Franklin, Tennessee, he was captured, being accused of loyalty to the Confederacy, and imprisoned.

After his release he felt burdened by the Lord to try to help the rebuilding of spiritual life in Franklin. His plan was to begin holding weekly prayer sessions, some of which lasted several hours. God's Spirit moved in the town and revival broke out.

From there Brother Bounds went on to become an itinerant preacher in such places as Selma, Alabama; St. Louis, Missouri (in 1875), where he served in two different Methodist churches; and Nashville, Tennessee.

In 1876, at the age of 41, he married Emma Barnett of Eufaula, Alabama. God blessed their family with two daughters. Sadly, Emma died in 1886. The following year Bounds married Emma's cousin, Hattie Barnett. God blessed the family with five more children.

For eight years, during this same time period, Edward was also the editor of the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*.

From 1892-1896 Bounds was also the associate editor of the official Methodist newspaper, *The Nashville Christian Advocate*.

In 1895, after his time in Nashville, Edward moved to his home in Washington, Georgia, where he spent the last eighteen years of his life writing and preaching in some evangelistic meetings. His sermons were usually on the topics of prayer and Heaven. Edward Bounds was a strong believer in prayer and would spend three hours every morning from 4:00 a.m. until 7 a.m. on his knees before the Lord.

Brother Bounds is most often remembered for his writing. He wrote twelve books on prayer between 1895 and 1913. Two of these books were published while he was still living, the others being published after his death. Although his *Complete Works on Prayer* is a classic, his *Power Through Prayer* is probably the best well-known.

In the last year of his life his body steadily weakened but his faith increased as did his longing for Heaven—being in the presence of his Lord. Edward McKendree Bounds went home to be with the Lord on the afternoon of August 24, 1913, at the age of 78.

—Gail L. Emerson

# COUNTERINTUITIVE FAITH

by Ray Pritchard

Not long ago Marlene and I were having dinner with some close friends who are also supporters of our ministry. At one point during a delightful evening, the husband looked at me and said, "What you are doing is counterintuitive." The dictionary defines *counterintuitive* as being "contrary to what common sense would suggest."

As I thought about it later, I realized my friend was actually stating a profound biblical truth. Living by faith will always involve some things that are "contrary to what common sense would suggest."

- Building an ark is counterintuitive.
- Leaving Ur of the Chaldees for an unknown land is counterintuitive.
- Crossing the Red Sea on dry ground is counterintuitive.
- Facing Goliath without armor is counterintuitive.
- Marching around Jericho is counterintuitive.
- Walking on water is counterintuitive.

You could say that every biblical hero did things that were counterintuitive; that is, they didn't fit into the conventional wisdom of the times. And it doesn't always involve the miraculous. Simple obedience to God is often "contrary to what common sense would suggest."

By definition faith "makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us proof of what we cannot see" (Hebrews 11:1, CEV). Later on in Hebrews 11 we are told that Moses persevered because "he saw him who is invisible" (v. 27, NIV).

That's one of the most remarkable and revealing statements in the entire Bible. It appears to be an impossibility. How do you "see" an invisible person? If you can be seen, you are not invisible. But God was invisible and yet Moses "saw" Him. How? "By faith." Moses had faith and his faith gave him sight.

That's the ultimate counterintuitive statement. Faith sees what is really there even though others see nothing at all. Faith believes what is true even though others don't believe it at all. By faith we see reality, which means we see beyond the world around us. But that concept should not seem strange at all. After all, the beloved hymn "Amazing Grace" contains this line, "I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see." My favorite definition of faith comes from Philip Yancey, who said, "Faith means believing in advance what will only make sense in reverse."

So many things in this life make no sense to us. We all have very deep and personal questions that defy human answers. We want to know why things happen the way they do and why couldn't things have happened some other way. It would be wrong to say that faith provides all the answers. It doesn't.

Perhaps in heaven we will fully understand or perhaps in heaven our desire to know will be transformed by our vision of the Lord.

By faith we see things that are invisible to others and by faith we believe in advance those things that right now make no sense but one day will make perfect sense because we will view them in reverse. The world says, "Seeing is believing." God says, "Believing is seeing." We believe; therefore we see.

What my friend said the other night is true in some respects at least. What we are doing right now is counterintuitive. It is contrary to what common sense would suggest. But the life of faith is always counterintuitive. By faith the children of God move forward, sometimes doing things that make no sense to others. It worked out pretty well for Moses and Joshua and David and even

*(continued on page 11)*

**Living by faith will always involve some things that are "contrary to what common sense would suggest."**

## From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

# Stewardship of Time

by John E. Glick

We sometimes feel we don't have enough time, but God has allotted to each of us the same amount. He wants us to be good stewards of it. We all have 24 hours in a day.

The problem is with what we give priority in our lives. We need to **find time** or **take time** for the really important things. Our relationship with the Lord and our family certainly falls in this category. Church activities surely belong on our time schedules. When we **spend time** in such matters we are investing in eternity.

When things go wrong at work and machinery breaks down, we may complain about **losing time**. How we respond to interruptions in our plans says something about our level of maturity. Have we learned to trust God with the details of daily life? Interruptions are not necessarily lost time. They may be time that God is using to teach us patience and to perfect our character.

Time can be misused. Time spent in doing foolish things that have no value is **wasted time**. There may be time during daily activities that we could be praying, meditating, or thinking constructive thoughts. Let's not waste that time by letting our minds idle away. By using our **spare time** for something worthwhile, we need not **kill time**.

We can be guilty of **stealing time**. An example of this is a public meeting with several assigned topics. If one speaker goes **overtime**, is he not robbing his brother of time allotted for the next topic?

There's also the matter of **being on time**. Being prompt in meeting appointments enhances our Christian testimony. What employer doesn't appreciate having his employees arrive on the job on time? A particular area of concern is habitual tardiness at church services. Could we not easily get ready a little earlier in order to be at church and seated before starting time? Walking in after the service has begun is distracting to those worshiping. Being prompt at church honors God and is a blessing to us.

Maybe Sunday morning is our time to sleep in. Abraham rose early in the morning to begin the unwelcome journey to Mt. Moriah to offer up Isaac. Would it not please God if we would rise early on Sunday morning and pray for the service?

How we use our time will make a difference in eternity. Our time on earth is too short to spend in anything but godly living. Let us **redeem the time** because the days are evil. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Calvary Messenger*, January 2007.

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



## *A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**JANUARY 6, 2008**

### ***Jesus in His Father's House***

Luke 2:41-52

Last Sunday we found Jesus in the temple as a 40-day-old baby being dedicated to God as a firstborn son, as required by the sparing of Israel's firstborn sons in Egypt. There He was blessed by Simeon who also prophetically predicted the scope of His ministry. Today, twelve years later, we find Jesus in the temple again, in widely different circumstances, but still fulfilling God's plan in the developing story of His earthly life.

Again in this passage we see the strict adherence of Joseph and Mary to the Law. Every year they made the approximately 70-mile journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem to participate in the feast of Passover. In today's text Jesus accompanies them. At thirteen years of age every Jewish boy became a "son of the law." His teaching and training in the law and his observance of the ordinances began at that point. Jesus was here beginning to fulfill the responsibilities of a normal Jewish man-child.

Pilgrims to the feasts in Jerusalem traveled in groups for safety and camaraderie. So when the group from Nazareth started the trek homeward, Joseph and Mary were not initially concerned that Jesus was not by their side. "They supposed him to have been in the company." However, when making camp the first evening of their journey, and not finding Him, they became alarmed.

Returning to Jerusalem the next day, they found Him the day after, sitting at the feet of the doctors of the Law in the temple precincts. The method of Jewish instruction was one of fielding and discussing questions relating to the law and the prophets. Jesus

was engaging Himself as a student, yet showing maturity and insight far beyond His years. In fact, those with whom He was interacting were amazed "at his understanding and answers." And was it any wonder?

Even His parents, with their understanding of who this child was, were amazed to find Him in this setting and thus engaged. His mother's inquiry reflects a mother's heart: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" Jesus' response to her additional statement that she and His father had anxiously sought Him is interesting in that it reveals His recognition of His true Father. It also reveals somewhat of an awareness of His mission that He must be about His "Father's business." Can you blame Mary and Joseph for not comprehending His statement?

We see Jesus', dare we say, child-like attitude in submitting to His parents, meekly accompanying them home to Nazareth. Mary, no doubt with mixed feelings, stored all these experiences in her heart where she often pondered their meanings and implications. Did she really understand this Son of hers, this God-given child whom she bore, nursed, and nurtured? It was all so overwhelming.

We note from verse 52 that Jesus developed as any normal parent would wish their child to develop. He grew in wisdom, He grew physically, He grew spiritually, He developed socially. The next eighteen years of Jesus' life, until His presentation to Israel at the start of His ministry, are cloaked in secrecy. But be assured, Jesus was developing character.

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

1. There is silence over Jesus' first twelve years of life, although verses 40 and 52 provide some hints. What do you think Jesus' childhood was like? Maybe some

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discussion.

2. Study the religious responsibilities of the 12-13-year-old Jewish boy. Was it necessary for Jesus to observe these? Why?
3. Of course we don't know, but when do you think Jesus the God-man became aware of His divinity and mission? Does this text give us any clues?
4. Again, we can only speculate, but what kind of questions do you believe Jesus was asking of the doctors of the Law?
5. We believe that when God created Adam He created a fully mature man. Why do you suppose God chose to send His Son into the world as a baby? Explore the implications.

## **JANUARY 13, 2008**

### ***Jesus Instructs His Followers in the Way of Love***

Luke 6:27-36

The events between last Sunday's lesson and today's include Jesus' baptism and temptation, the beginning of His ministry (including rejection at Nazareth), the calling of disciples, and His teaching, healing ministry. Today's lesson text is an excerpt from His "Sermon on the Plain" (see verse 17), similar to "The Sermon on the Mount" which is found in Matthew, Chapters 5, 6, and 7. The passage for study today focuses on love in interpersonal relationships.

Jesus turned the Law upside down by giving new meaning to interpersonal relationships and attitudes. It was no longer to be tit-for-tat, but love—in spite of mistreatment. The Law of the kingdom was love, transforming the law of retaliation into a positive, selfless attitude toward those who have done us wrong or caused us hurt. Jesus set out to change attitudes and relationships with His new teaching.

After proclaiming some beatitudes and issuing some woes (verses 20-26), Jesus proceeds in our lesson text with the pronouncement of kingdom principles as opposed to the nature of the Law. His hearers understood

reciprocal justice, but here was something new: "Love your enemy. Do good to those who hate you. Bless them that curse you. Pray for your oppressor." Here were responses of the will, the heart, not harsh physical reciprocity. Such responses would make friends out of enemies.

Here was true love, agape, self-giving, self-sacrificing concern, not only for one's neighbor, but also for one's enemy. The principles Jesus taught were of returning good for evil, of seeking the other person's good above one's own. These were hard sayings. But Jesus put them into perspective by stating the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do to you." That puts a personal motivation on the idea of doing good to others; treat others, even your enemies, as you wish to be treated.

Jesus goes on to expand His teaching by saying there is no particular merit, however, in treating others well simply so they will treat you well. Sinners do as much. It is only selfish motivation that treats others well in anticipation of equal return. But to do good and lend without expectation of return lifts one above mere human response and identifies one as a child of God, one whose heart has been touched by His motivating, self-giving love.

Jesus closes this discourse on love by showing that our heavenly Father treats all men equally. He is kind to those who show no response of kindness or mercy or thankfulness. He is our example. We are to take our pattern for attitudes and relationships from Him. And He will reward those who live and act as He acts in relationships.

Jesus begins this passage by saying, "I say unto you who hear." Those who hear with the mind and will are truly His followers. His parting admonition in verse 36 is to be "merciful, as your Father is merciful." We are to exhibit His qualities of love and mercy in our actions. Then we will live selfless lives, going out of our way to seek the good of others, even at personal cost to ourselves.

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

1. Be sure to note the similarities between this "Sermon on the Plain" and "The

- Sermon on the Mount.”
2. What was so different about the kingdom principles outlined by Jesus and the principles of the Law as practiced by the Jews?
  3. Which is easier to practice—love or justice? Why? This should prompt some discussion.
  4. What does it take for us to act with selfless love toward others, especially our enemies? What is the motivation for such action? Discuss.
  5. What is the purpose for this principle of selfless love? Why did Jesus initiate it?

## **JANUARY 20, 2008**

### ***Jesus Teaches His Disciples to Pray***

Luke 11:5-13

Today’s text is the result of a request by Jesus’ disciples in the first verse of this chapter: “Lord, teach us to pray.” They had observed Jesus’ life of prayer and requested His help in developing their own. Jesus first of all gives them what we call “The Lord’s Prayer,” that brief, all-encompassing prayer acknowledging God’s sovereignty, our daily dependence on Him, and a plea for forgiveness of the sins we are so prone to commit. Jesus then goes on in verses 5-13 to teach, by illustration, the importance of importunity in prayer.

We best understand our text in conjunction with the themes of the first four verses of the chapter. And we must understand that the teaching here is not about God’s unwillingness, but the focus is to be on our earnest persistence or, as one commentator stated, our “shameless persistence” in bringing our requests to God. Martin Luther stated it this way: “Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness.” God expects diligence in our coming to Him.

In Jesus’ parable a traveler shows up at a friend’s house late at night. This man, being out of food, goes to the house of a friend to request three loaves of bread to feed his

hungry traveling friend. The homeowner is inconvenienced. It is late at night. His house is closed for the night; he and his family are in bed. However, friendship aside, he is persuaded by his friend’s importunity and so arises and gives him what he asks. Bold persistence achieved results.

Jesus then, in verses 9 and 10, teaches the importance of persistence in prayer. Ask, seek, and knock are parallelisms, yet also indicate an increasing intensity in one’s request. One dare not be casual in his requests, but sincere, determined, and boldly persistent. But again, it is not to impress God, but rather to stir us to deep desire and longing expression. Jesus says that to such there will be results. (And remember what we are praying for, verses 2, 3, 4.)

Jesus uses another illustration to portray the goodness of God in granting His children’s requests. His argument is that even a human father will not respond with inappropriate gifts when his children ask. So how much more will our heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him? (Matthew 7:11). And what could be a better gift than the Holy Spirit promised to the persistent inquirer here in verse 13?

There is so much we need to learn about effective prayer. It is not inappropriate to ask concerning our own needs. But prayer should not be looked upon as only a channel for God to improve our situation. Adam Clarke says: “Be importunate with God, not so much to prevail on Him . . . as to get yourself brought into a proper disposition to receive that mercy which He is ever disposed to give.” Prayer must affect us. “Lord, teach us to pray.”

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

1. Be sure you understand the major themes in “The Lord’s Prayer.” The implications cover the full scope of life and relationships.
2. Study the customs of the time for better understanding of verses 5-8. Why was the man so inconvenienced?
3. What are the keys to effective prayer? (They are not all found in this text.)
4. Does God answer all prayers? What should we do if we feel we are not getting an

answer? Maybe discuss this with your class.  
5. What is the purpose of prayer? Ponder this deeply.

## **JANUARY 27, 2008**

### ***Don't Worry, Trust God***

Luke 12:22-34

Jesus' teaching in verses 22-34 on trusting God to supply one's needs follows immediately after His response to an inquiry to serve as a judge between brothers regarding the matter of an inheritance. He let it be known that He was not called to be an arbiter in such matters. Then, as a warning against covetousness, He gave the parable of the rich farmer who made plans to store his bountiful crops as security against want for the rest of his life. Jesus pointed out the folly of such an attitude, then launched into the discourse comprising today's lesson on trusting God's providence to supply our every need.

Is Jesus' teaching here that we are to have absolutely no concern for our life, and the necessities which sustain it? Hardly. That would abrogate the value He places on life, as evidenced throughout His teaching. What He is speaking to here are priorities and attitudes. Man is not to worry about food and clothing—they are not to become his consuming passion to the detriment of his pursuit of spiritual well-being. "The life," Jesus says, is "more [important] than food."

To illustrate His teaching Jesus used birds and flowers. Birds don't plant crops nor reap harvests. Flowers don't weave clothing. Both are sustained by a caring heavenly Father. And aren't you much more valuable than birds or flowers? And since worry cannot produce growth or provisions, why fret and worry about that which is totally under God's control? In the final analysis, man, on his own, is helpless to accomplish anything without God's cooperation. So the key is to allow God to do what only He can do and man to do what God expects of him. And what is that?

God's expectation of His children is for them to seek "the kingdom of God." Matthew adds "and his righteousness." The concept here is that man's first priority is to be busy with God's kingdom-work, as opposed to placing first priority on the care of self. Then our kind, benevolent heavenly Father will provide the necessities of life—plus more.

He who knows all things knows our needs. He who controls all things provides for those who put their trust in Him. Furthermore, it is His pleasure to give good things to His children. Those who do not know Him as their Father restlessly expend their energies attempting to satisfy their earthly desires.

As an additional element of His teaching Jesus instructs those who are serious about trust to sell their possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. That would indicate the ultimate trust. And, Jesus says, it will not go unrewarded. It will secure treasure in heaven where neither theft nor deterioration can affect it.

Then comes the clincher in verse 34: "For where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be." So, is your heart set on earthly things, or on heavenly? That identifies the level of one's trust in God. Do we totally depend on Him, or are we struggling along in our own efforts? The answer says much about ourselves.

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

1. How do you correlate Jesus' teaching here with other New Testament Scriptures, for instance 1 Timothy 5:8 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10, which teach the necessity of diligent work? Discuss.
2. How do we achieve balance between the worry to which we are so prone and a legitimate concern for our personal well-being?
3. Is it possible for trust in God to degenerate into carelessness on our part? How? Discuss.
4. Discuss ways we can seek God's kingdom. What does that mean?
5. Is Jesus saying that it is wrong to lay up treasure on earth? How seriously do we take this teaching? ■

# 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

## “Dark Web” Project Tracks Terrorists

At the University of Arizona, “The Dark Web Project,” which is funded by the federal government, aims to gather all terrorist-generated material on the web, analyze it, and track the terrorists’ identities and activities. The National Science Foundation writes, “One of the tools developed by Dark Web is a technique called Writeprint, which automatically extracts thousands of multi-lingual, structural, and semantic features to determine who is creating ‘anonymous’ content online. Writeprint can look at a posting on an online bulletin board, for example, and compare it with writings found elsewhere on the Internet. By analyzing these certain features, it can determine with more than 95 percent accuracy if the author has produced other content in the past. The system can then alert analysts when the same author produces new content, as well as where on the Internet the content is being copied, linked to, or discussed.”

—Source: *National Science Foundation*

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## Atrocities Continue in Burma

A Christian friend of mine here in Chiang Mai is a refugee from Burma. (She works closely with GTO.) Just yesterday, the Burmese Army came and burned her former village to the ground, including their rice barn with the whole village’s supply of rice for the year. This is, obviously, not an isolated incident as the Burmese Junta con-

tinues its reign of terror. CAM has provided rice for this village.

—Sources: Burmese refugee, missionaries in Chiang Mai

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## Most Science Studies Appear to Be Tainted

We all make mistakes and, if you believe medical scholar John Ioannidis, scientists make more than their fair share. By his calculations, most published research findings are wrong.

Dr. Ioannidis is an epidemiologist who studies research methods at the University of Ioannina School of Medicine in Greece, and Tufts University in Medford, Mass. In a series of influential analytical reports, he has documented how, in thousands of peer-reviewed research papers published every year, there may be so much less than meets the eye.

These flawed findings, for the most part, stem not from fraud or formal misconduct, but from more mundane misbehavior: miscalculation, poor study design, or self-serving data analysis. “There is an increasing concern that in modern research, false findings may be the majority or even the vast majority of published research claims,” Dr. Ioannidis said. “A new claim about a research finding is more likely to be false than true.

—Excerpt from “Most Science Studies Appear to Be Tainted by Sloppy Analysis” by Robert Hotz in *The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 14, 2007 (<http://tinyurl.com/ywnjc7>)

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## Hillary Rolling in Tainted Money

One of the top Democrat fundraisers, Norman Hsu, has been indicted for mail fraud, wire fraud, and violations of election law. He allegedly ran a Ponzi scheme to finance his massive donations to Democrats. He is charged with bilking investors out of \$60 million. Not only did he pressure his wealthy clients (whom he was scamming) to give money to Democrats, but he also laundered money through his friends (many of whom could have never afforded to give a \$4600 donation) to bypass election finance limits. He bundled \$850,000 in donations from Hillary alone. Hillary is returning that money, but is not returning the \$263,000 from Hsu to her Senate campaign.

After he was arrested, he skipped bail twice, fleeing via Amtrak and trying to commit suicide.

That is only the start of Hillary's money woes—all of which hearken to her husband's scandals involving Asian donations.

The right-wing *New York Post* has done more investigations: "Hillary Clinton's campaign has been raising huge piles of money in Chinatown, but some of it has come from donors who can't be located or who were improperly repaid for their contributions, according to *The Post* and other reports."

"A search of Chinatown donors yesterday by *The Post* found several bogus addresses and some contributions that raised eyebrows."

*The Post* goes on to give examples of fake addresses, nonexistent donors, and leaders of powerful neighborhood "organizations" reimbursing people for making donations (which is strictly illegal).

—Excerpts from "An unlikely treasure trove of donors for Clinton" in *The Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 19, 2007 (<http://tinyurl.com/26ftq3>) and "Hill's cash eyed as Chinese-laundered" in *The New York Post*, Oct. 20, 2007 (<http://tinyurl.com/2nwfjmj>); Sources: *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Post*, *The New York Times*, The Hillary Project ([HillaryProject.com](http://HillaryProject.com))

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## The Forbes 400 as a Lesson in Economics

The 2007 edition of the Forbes 400 was

released last week. As in years past, it's one of the more useful economic annuals when it comes to laying bare the folly of antitrust, worries over the wealth gap, and perhaps silliest of all, the assumption that the rich became that way for exploiting the non-rich.

Even though the wealth gap is a positive in most economies for driving the economic creativity of those not-yet-rich, much is made of it in the media and among politicians who worry about individual wealth consolidation even more than they do the corporate kind. A quick look at the Forbes 400 would surely assuage some of their fears.

Indeed, of the charter members of the first Forbes 400, only 32 remain today. Far from a country where only the rich get richer, the wealthy in the U.S. are very much a moving target. While there are 74 Forbes 400 members who inherited their entire fortune, 270 members are entirely self-made. Though many attended Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, there are countless stories within of high school and college dropouts, not to mention others who grew up extremely poor. Politicians who regularly engage in class warfare would do well to keep the Forbes 400 out of the hands of their constituents, because it makes a mockery of the kind "Two Americas" rhetoric suggesting the existence of a glass ceiling that keeps hard workers at the bottom of the economic ladder. To read the Forbes 400 is to know with surety that the U.S. is still very much the land of opportunity.

—Excerpt from "The Forbes 400 as a Lesson in Economics" by John Tammy on RealClearPolitics.com (<http://tinyurl.com/33bl4n>)

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## A Most Unusual Spy Ring

The Hoystory blog writes: "The 9/11 Commission Report pinned a good part of the failure to prevent the terrorist attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people, on the wall that had been erected to keep the intelligence and law enforcement communities from talking to each other. Intelligence information could taint criminal trials, and had to be kept from the FBI and local law enforcement officials. Of course, this was all before the government discovered that suicide bombers—whether using explosive

vests or passenger airplanes—quickly become immune to prosecution.”

“But now that wall has come down? Hasn’t it?”

“Maybe not, if this little-noticed report in Saturday’s *San Diego Union-Tribune* is correct.”

*The San Diego Union-Tribune* writes: “Marine Gunnery Sgt. Gary Maziarz said patriotism motivated him to join a spy ring, smuggle secret files from Camp Pendleton, and give them to law enforcement officers for anti-terrorism work in Southern California.

“He knew his group was violating national security laws. But he said bureaucratic walls erected by the military and civilian agencies were hampering intelligence sharing and coordination, making the nation more vulnerable to terrorists.”

Maziarz, a member of the Marine Forces Reserve, had helped search for survivors in New York after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

“I decided to make a difference and act,” Maziarz testified during his court-martial in July at Camp Pendleton.”

The *Union-Tribune* goes on to detail the spy ring which contained a reserve Marine colonel with a Bronze Star who is a detective with the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s department and who cofounded their anti-terrorism unit, a former reserve Marine colonel who is an officer with the Los Angeles Police Department, another Marine reserve officer who is a pilot for Delta, and a Navy reservist who works as a civilian intelligence analyst for the military.

—Excerpts from “A most unusual spy ring” on Hoy-story (<http://tinyurl.com/3abu5m>) and “Marine took files as part of spy ring” from *The San Diego Union-Tribune* (<http://tinyurl.com/3cvkkr>).

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### The Persecuted Church Around the World

Instead of detailing the many news stories of the persecuted church around the world, I will simply list the headlines: “Muslim mob attacks Christians in northern Nigeria; 10 killed, hundreds displaced,” “Pakistan Muslim Militants Attack Church,” “Persecution of [Christian] Degar

Montagnards [an ethnic group in Vietnam] Continues,” “Pastor and Wife Victims of Brutal Attack in Kerala, India,” “Indian Pastor jailed with a believer in Chhattisgarh,” “Pol Pot’s chief torturer comes to Christ,” “Prominent [Chinese] House Church pastor suffers inhumane treatment in custody,” “Suicide Bomber Kills Youth, Wounds Others in Sudanese Church,” “Missionary who ‘knew the risks’ now scheduled for public execution in N. Korea,” “Kazakhstan charges pastors with treason.”

—Sources: *OneNewsNow.com*, *Worthy News*, *ASSIST News Service*, *Voice of the Martyrs Persecution blog*, *Christianity Today*

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### Robotic Cannon Goes Haywire

An automated robotic weapons platform had a software or mechanical glitch and went bonkers in South Africa, spraying the testing range with 500 35 mm high explosive rounds, killing nine and injuring eleven. —Sources: *Slashdot*, *Wired Blog*

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### Turkey Authorizes Cross-Border Iraq Military Operation

A region known as Kurdistan (E. Turkey, N. Iraq, N. Syria, N. Armenia, and NW Iran) is inhabited largely by Kurds (an ethnic group). The Kurds have been the most stable and democratic of the three factions in Iraq (Kurds, Shiites, Sunnis). They enjoyed a large degree of autonomy under Hussein (due to fighting for it) and they helped fight against Hussein in Operation Iraqi Freedom. However, there are terrorist elements among the Kurds that are fighting for independence from Turkey, Syria, Iran, et. al. Turkey has been increasingly frustrated with Kurds who find safe haven in Iraq, but launch cross border terrorist attacks against Turkey. Turkey’s parliament just approved a resolution authorizing cross-border military action against the PKK—the main Kurdish terrorist organization. This violation of sovereignty has not sat well with the Iraqi or U.S. governments.

—Sources: *AP*, *Wikipedia*

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## Middle Schoolers to Get Birth Control?

Schools in Maine already provide middle schoolers (grades 6-8, ages 11-13) with condoms without informing their parents; however, a new proposal pushed by school officials would allow students to receive birth control pills from the school's health center without informing parents. This "right" is protected by state law. —Source: *Portland Press Herald*

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## Suicide Bombings Attempt Bhutto Assassination

Pakistan's former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto recently returned to Pakistan after being in exile. A huge crowd of 300,000 supporters greeted her in the streets. She is strongly pro-democratic and pro-U.S. Her caravan was attacked by suicide bombers, killing 126 and injuring 248. She narrowly escaped death by having just descended from the roof of her bus into the inside. Those that remained on top of the bus were killed.

—Sources: *AP, Sky News, BBC*

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## Most Fake Bombs Missed

TSA screeners at LAX missed 75% and Chicago O'Hare missed 60% of fake bombs on undercover agents. San Francisco missed only 20% of the bombs—however, those at SF are private contractors rather than government-managed employees. This is further evidence that the performance-motivated private sector does a better job than government inefficiency.

—Source: *USA Today*

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## Hacked 9-1-1 System Sends SWAT Team

The Orange County, CA's 9-1-1 system showed a request for a SWAT team to deploy to stop a cocaine-laden killer of two and who was still armed and threatening to kill more. A SWAT team responded quickly, a police chopper was deployed, and neighbors were

evacuated. As the SWAT team prepared to storm the house, they confronted a man clutching a knife. The man of the house had been awakened from his peaceful sleep by the sounds of what he thought were prowlers and he had gone to investigate. It turns out that a 19-year-old teen from Seattle had hacked into their system and sent them a fake request for a random house. In the last two years, investigators believe that he made over 194 false 9-1-1 requests in various systems around the country. In the Orange County case he is being charged with assault by proxy (he is responsible for the assault by the SWAT team) and unauthorized computer access.

—Sources: *Seattle Post-Intelligencer, PC World*

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## Custom Trucks Steal Gas

Police have arrested several people who have been very successfully using specially modified trucks with a trapdoor in the cargo section. The truck would pull into the station over the tank-refill manholes, the driver would get out and pretend to tinker under the hood, and a man in the cargo section would open the trapdoor and connect hoses to the underground storage tanks. The men arrested stole over 10,000 gallons of gas since January.

In other news, a 7,100 gallon diesel tanker was recovered in Baltimore after being hijacked.

—Sources: *Local 6, ABC News*

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

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## COUNTERINTUITIVE FAITH . . . cont'd.

for Daniel's three friends in the furnace. We have our trials and sometimes our doubts, but having seen Him who is invisible, we do not live by the conventional wisdom of the world. For those who live by faith, everything will make sense in the end. If God is God, that must be true. If everything in your life can be explained without God, what do you need God for?

—Reprinted with permission from *Kindred Spirit*, Fall 2007.

# Anointing With Oil

by Dale Eby

In the beginning God created man to be well and healthy. Because of the Fall, every human body will face sickness, some to a much greater degree than others, often for reasons only God knows. According to Leviticus 14:34, and Exodus 15:26, God puts disease (sickness) in a person's life and according to Exodus 23:25, He is the one who heals disease (sickness).

There are at least six reasons given in Scripture for a person's sickness. The result of old age (Ecclesiastes 12:3-7) is one that brings ailments and discomforts never considered by a young person. Many times physical life ends by disease that settles in our bodies.

A second reason God allows sickness is for testing by Satan (Job 2:7). Job certainly was at the center of the contest between Satan and God. God ultimately is the winner, yet Satan has been given time to be a part of the testings of our life.

Thirdly, sickness can come because of a violation of health rules (Hosea 7:5). This verse says, "Have made him sick with bottles of wine." We may fail in temperance or lack discipline to eat or act right until sickness brings us down. Overworking, failure to guard our eyesight, hearing, lungs, etc., affect the body.

The fourth reason sickness may come is because of personal sin (Acts 12:23). Herod was proud and thus smitten by worms and died. This was God's judgment on a man who had forsaken Him.

Fifthly, sickness may be the chastening of the Lord (Hebrews 12:6; Job

33:19). Revelation 3:19 says, "As many as I love . . . I rebuke and chasten."

The sixth reason for sickness is for the benefit of others. In 2 Samuel 12:15 sickness of the innocent was for the benefit of David. In John 9:1-3, there was sickness that the "works of God be made manifest." A friend of mine was in the hospital for weeks with a leg in traction.

During his stay, at least one of his room-mates gave his heart to the Lord. God placed my friend there for "such a time as this" that a soul could get right with God. It is certainly appropriate to evaluate why sickness is upon us, yet we must trust that God is with us and controlling our physical lot in life.

As I write this article, my extended family grieves the loss of a family member who believed God would heal if there was enough faith extended by the person sick. How should we view the issue of divine healing? God performed divine healing in the Old Testament. In 1 Kings 17:17-24 Elijah was part of the widow of Zarephath's son being raised to life. Jesus performed

multitudes of divine healings. Blind, lame, lepers, deaf, dumb, and dead were made whole again. But God does not always choose to heal. Both Kathryn Kuhlman, a self-proclaimed divine healer, and our family member who preached the "divine healing gospel," died. You and I need a proper view of God and suffering. This view includes the belief that God is able to heal "all thy diseases" (Psalm 103:3). We need to believe that God is still a God of love when He allows

***"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."***

pain to come. God desires faith in Him. It is while lying on our back in sickness, that He often speaks to us and softens us. God certainly desires that we accept His decision to heal or not to heal. God is our Father and we are His children. Sickness is a reminder that we will die; we need to be ready. Healing is not always God's will or Timothy's stomach problem would have gone away (1 Timothy 5:23), Trophimus would have been healed by Paul instead of left sick (2 Timothy 4:20), and Paul's "thorn" of the flesh would have been cured (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Second Corinthians 12:9 says, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

So what does all this have to do with anointing of oil? In James 5:13-16 the invitation is given for the sick to be anointed with oil as a step of faith in God. Though it is often proper to use medications (1 Timothy 5:23) and doctors, it is never proper to do as King Asa in 2 Chronicles 16:12, 13, who "sought not to the Lord but to the physicians." Sometimes God requires steps of faith for our healing such as when Naaman needed to dip in the muddy Jordan River, and the multitude needed to step into the pool in John 5:1-9. Anointing with oil is a step of faith we are invited to take.

Anointing in the Old Testament included when called to serve as a priest (Exodus 28:41), a high priest (Exodus 29:7), a prophet (1 Kings 19:16), and a king (1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1; 16:12, 13). In the Gospels there were anointings when someone fasted (Matthew 6:17). But the anointing of oil of James 5 was an anointing for a person who was sick, yet trusting God for his life. There are several things to keep clear when practicing this ordinance. A person is not anointed for just anything in Scripture.

The circumstance is spelled out. It is for one who is "sick among you" (James

5:14). James 5:14, 15 use the word *sick* with two different meanings. The first refers to the weak and impotent, the second refers to the wearied. Therefore, if there is no physical healing, there is spiritual benefit. The use of this ordinance is not intended for just anyone. It is not for the unconverted. The blood of Jesus needs to be applied before the oil should be administered. This rules out the anointing of children. We do not anoint children for the same reason we do not baptize children. Believing before baptism is clearly taught and the prayer of faith is clearly required before anointing with oil (James 5:15). When our children are sick and in need of a special touch from God we have the privilege of laying hands on them and praying over them (Mark 16:18; Acts 28:8).

Practicing the ordinance of anointing with oil should involve the elders of the church (James 5:14). This ordinance is to be administered by the sick person's spiritual leaders. The elders are responsible for seeing that there is evidence of faith, confession of sin, and that there is a desire for God's will to be done. Confession of sins is central to the practicing of this ordinance (James 5:16). The condition of the heart is important. If there is known ongoing sin the elders should not anoint. God loves to move among us when there is a willingness to examine ourselves for sin. Those involved in the anointing service should be transparent about their lives as the prayer of faith is lifted to God.

God has blessings for the recipients of anointing with oil, including acceptance of the situation, satisfaction in obedience, and an increased faith in God. This step of faith has brought testimonies far more important than the physical healing many have experienced. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Mid-Atlantic Informer*, September 2007.

**Anointing  
with oil is a  
step of faith  
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invited to  
take.**



## 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; [swandtrump@verizon.net](mailto:swandtrump@verizon.net).

# An Appointment That Must Be Kept

by Vance Havner (1901-1986)

*"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31).*

This text says three tremendous things: God has appointed a day, He has ordained a judge, and He has commanded repentance.

### **God Has Appointed a Day**

I would say to every unsaved boy and girl, man and woman, that God has appointed a day of judgment. You have an appointment with the Almighty, a date with Deity. That appointment must be kept. It cannot be postponed or canceled. You cannot dodge this one. Your secretary cannot say, "He's busy." Some of us are prompt and punctual about our business and social engagements, but we ignore the supreme date on life's calendar.

It has been said that the Apostle Paul had only two dates on his calendar, "To day" and "that day." We are sure of those two days. We have *today*, the present

moment at least; and *that day* is bound to come. If you are ready for *that day*, you are ready *today*; and if you are saved *today*, you are ready for *that day*. God has set a day, and you had better enter it on your calendar, for it is already on His.

A high school student was talking with his godly pastor. "What are you going to do in college?" he was asked.

"I am going to study law."

"And after that, what?"

"I will hang up my shingle."

"And after that, what?"

"Later I will build up a law firm."

"And after that, what?"

"Oh, I suppose someday I will retire."

"And after that, what?"

The student saw what was coming. "I guess I'll die then."

"And after that, what?" The young man remained silent, but the pastor said, "I'll tell you what comes next: 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.'"

Always there looms that date with Deity, that appointment with the Almighty. It is optional whether or not a man gets saved, but the consequences of that choice are not optional. A man may sow what he will, but he cannot choose after he sows whether he

will gather wheat or tares. He will reap what he sows. The harvest is not optional. "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).

God has appointed a day. And we will abide by His calendar, not ours.

After the *Titanic* went down, the passenger lists were posted in the steamship offices. Relatives and friends who saw the names of their loved ones on the roll of the lost hoped that the list was not correct, but it was. And God's list on that day will be correct.

There will be only "Lost" and "Saved." Nothing can be done about it then. Everything will be settled when that date with Deity rolls around. We will not be gathering then for a second chance. No verdicts will be reconsidered. Everything is final—no appeal.

Something can be done about it now—but not then. There are not many things of which you can be sure these days, but you can count on that appointment with the Almighty. God keeps His Word.

### ***God Has Ordained a Judge***

God has not only appointed a day, He has ordained a Judge. Our text says that He will judge the world in righteousness. We do not always get a square deal now, but all accounts will be straightened then. God has a standard of righteousness that must be met, and He has never compromised with present-day, fuzzy notions of right and wrong. There was a day when God overlooked the times of ignorance, but He has never condoned sin in any age.

Now the Light has come in Jesus Christ. We could never attain to God's righteousness, but His Son has been made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. When we trust Christ, His righteousness becomes ours. Then we are ready for the appointed day, for, clad in His righteousness alone, we are faultless to

stand before the throne.

But He who is our Saviour now has been ordained our Judge then. God will judge the world by that Man whom He hath ordained. And He has attested to that fact by raising Him from the dead.

I have read of a woman who had a lawsuit coming up in court. She meant to secure the services of a leading lawyer in town but delayed going to his office. When she finally did ask his help in the approaching litigation, he said, "I am very sorry, but I have just been appointed a judge. I could have pleaded your case earlier, but now I can only judge you."

Our Saviour will be our Advocate if we commit our case to Him now; but if we fail in that, He will be our judge on that appointed day, for God has ordained Him to be the Judge.

A lot of smooth preaching today overlooks that aspect of His work. We hear a lot about the meek and lowly Nazarene going about doing good. Some make much of His Saviourhood, and well they may. Thank God for both Christ the Teacher and Jesus the Saviour, but we had better wake up to the fact that we are going to face Him in an entirely different capacity sometime. We are not hearing much these days about that Man whom God has ordained a Judge for that appointed day.

### ***God Has Commanded Repentance***

Not only has God appointed a day and ordained a Judge, but He has also commanded repentance. You will observe that God does not merely invite us to repent, and He does not suggest repentance; He commands it.

We mistake too many of God's commandments for mere invitations. Too much of modern preaching politely recommends repentance, and it lacks the solemn backdrop of approaching judgment. God commands us to repent, to believe, to obey, to do many other things—and *all* disobedience is sin.

There is no fear of God before the eyes of this generation. God is regarded as a

grandfatherly being trotting us on His knee and winking at our wickedness. The God of most modern individuals has no more moral force than Santa Claus. But the God of the Bible is a holy God who hates sin. He has appointed a day of judgment, He has ordained a Judge, and He commands repentance.

He commands all men everywhere to repent. Whoever you are, wherever you are—poor man, rich man, beggar man, thief, “there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:22, 23).

Whether you drive a Cadillac or push an applecarr through town, no matter which side of the railroad tracks is your home, you must repent. And “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

But repentance must be accompanied by faith. Paul preached “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). We must “repent, and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). The coming Judge is our present Saviour. If we put our trust in Him, we can know whom we have believed and be persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day. The way to get ready for the day appointed is to trust Him who will be the Judge ordained. If we are saved today, we shall be safe on that day.

Repentance is a change of mind toward God. It is turning from our unbelief to faith in the Saviour. Faith in Christ means simply to trust Him and to commit to Him all we are and have. It can be done in a moment, but it will last forever.

You have an appointment that must be kept. You must meet God. Better meet Him now in mercy that you may not face Him one day in judgment. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

There is an appointed time on that day and there is an accepted time today. Get ready today for that day! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Sword of the Lord*, Volume LXXIII, No. 19, Sept. 2007.

## When We Blow It

by Paul W. Brubaker

How would you like to have listed on your resume—“Builder of the Leaning Tower of Pisa”? For an edifice one hundred seventy-nine feet tall, we would probably all say that the guy who designed the tower’s foundation—to be only ten feet deep for a building that tall—probably wasn’t the brightest light in the harbor! The bell tower’s construction actually began in August of A.D. 1173, and continued, with two long interruptions, for about two hundred years, but the architect’s name remains uncertain—and maybe for good reason. The tower is almost twenty feet out of perpendicular! Or how about this entry on your resume—“Designed the ‘Edsel’ car for Ford Motor Company”? Edsel B. Ford, the only son of Henry Ford, died an untimely death in 1943 at the age of 49. As the ‘Edsel’ car was being designed in 1957, the irony of it all was that the car which was intended by Edsel Ford’s family to do him honor, turned out to be a dismal flop. One business writer stated that as far as he knew, there was only one case on record of an “Edsel” ever being stolen! Very few ever wanted an Edsel.

Those who have “arrived,” those who never seem to “blow it,” those who don’t make mistakes—probably shouldn’t be reading this devotional. But like it or not, blowing it, doing the wrong things, happens to us *all*. And unbelievably, it happens with remarkable regularity. (Romans 3:23 attests to the fact that all of us have fallen short.) And when people *have* “fallen short,” they have unique ways of hiding it. One writer has said, “*Stop and think of ways certain people can keep from coming out and confessing they blew it. Doctors can ‘bury’ their mistakes. Lawyers’ mistakes get shut up in prison—literally. Dentists’ mistakes are pulled. Plumbers’ mistakes are stopped. Carpenters turn their mistakes into sawdust!*”

Have YOU blown it lately? Well, take heart! One of the wonderful things about  
*(continued on page 18)*



## Counseling From the Word

# Aching Hearts That Laugh

*“Even in laughter the heart may ache,  
and the end of joy may be grief”* (Proverbs 14:13, ESV).

by Jeremy Lelek

Secular counseling is based on the premise that good therapy provides the context in which an individual will find ultimate healing and happiness for the soul. Healing, therefore, is thought to be found in therapeutic interventions, varying techniques, and raw human potential. For most, the successful counseling experience is characterized when a counselee finds joy and happiness where once there was only depression and despair. It is from such ideas that many Christians throughout the last several decades have built their ideas of human healing. Now, in America and throughout many countries in the world, people incessantly chase after that ultimate emotional state of healing and happiness in which the scars of the past and the disorders of the present find their cure. When examined biblically, the cautious thinker must step back, and sincerely ask, Is this the model of human change and transformation espoused in the pages of Scripture?

The writer of Proverbs offers a very interesting statement of wisdom as it relates to the emotional aspect of mankind. He states, Even in laughter the heart may ache. According to the empirical (or scientific) model, this statement appears to be a bit absurd. On the face of things, laughter signifies happiness and enjoyment, but the wisdom of Scripture makes a claim countering this assertion. So what does the Bible mean here?

One obvious interpretation of this passage is that people who may appear happy outwardly may in actuality be in a place of sorrow inwardly, as in one who pretends life is okay when it is really falling apart at the seams. The complexity and ambivalence of human emotion is captured in the fact that two opposing emotions are present simultaneously, making a counselee's feelings a very poor barometer by which to judge his or her emotional state. This is helpful wisdom for the counselor, especially since counselees may sometimes seek to hide their true feelings in order to prematurely terminate the counseling experience. Reasons for this may be that the counselee is experiencing a sense of shame and guilt or it could be an attempt to shrewdly hide sin. Therefore, counselors must seek to be very discerning when counselees, who initially seek counsel in a devastated emotional state, appear happy after a mere hour or two of disclosure and/or confession.

However, on a much deeper and significant level, this statement offers a profound illustration of the futility of happiness as the great standard of good counsel. The culture pants after unfettered happiness as a means to seek emotional fulfillment. Schaeffer's (1976) words have become hauntingly true in that most Americans desire personal peace (i.e., whatever makes them happy

and trouble-free) to the point that they are willing to accommodate to anything in order to achieve it. This is most true within the realm of counseling. For the Church, it has led to what Schaeffer termed the great evangelical disaster in which Christians accommodate to the world-spirit so much so that their identity as God's Church is lost (Schaeffer, 1984). The result? Christians and non-believers alike pursue happiness as the modern-day savior, all the while becoming more and more corrupt spiritually. In the midst of their so-called happiness, their hearts reflect more and more sorrow, and the aches of sin replace the peace of God. They laugh, they celebrate, they excel, and they succeed, but in reality, the vacuous existence of godlessness consumes their hearts to the point of existential sorrow. They, as Solomon, are forced to experience the consequences of their worldview, and are left to conclude in the end, that chasing after happiness as savior is as foolish as chasing after the wind. Solomon says, So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after the wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun (Ecclesiastes 2:9-11, ESV). Oh, that Christians would heed these timeless words.

Finally, the writer of Proverbs concludes, "... the end of joy may be grief." Again, this appears somewhat contradictory. Yet placed under the lens of Scripture, it is vividly clear. In the end, when people's lives have come to their final conclusion, all the joys and happy pursuits to which they aspired above all will end in eternal grief as the only Saviour of souls is perfectly revealed to mankind.

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Even Christians, motivated by selfish desires for joy, peace, and happiness will, at some point in their lives, experience this grief mentioned in Proverbs. They may leave a counselor's office feeling better, but ultimately, they will realize they had only entered into the joys that end in grief. Why? Simply put, they elevated the gifts (joy and happiness) above the Giver; and Jesus, via the counseling process, became nothing more than a convenient way to get what they wanted.

What is the goal of your counsel to others? Have you bought into the therapeutic paradigm of modern psychology where the pursuit of healing and happiness trumps all other objectives? While counselees may leave a counselor's office with joy and happiness, this Proverb begs the question: In what is the person finding happiness and joy? If it is because they have a raised self-esteem, or have forgiven themselves and God, or have learned communication techniques that avoid tension in hard discussions, have they really been offered the joy found in none other than the Person of Jesus Christ? If not, counselors must take heed of Proverbs 14:13 lest their counsel, under the guise of Christianity, provides counselees with a laughter that will only produce an aching heart and a joy that ends in grief. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Association of Biblical Counselors Newsletter*; October 2007. [www.christiancounseling.com](http://www.christiancounseling.com).



### When We Blow It . . . cont'd from p. 16

the God we serve is that He takes our "leaning tower" failures and our dismal "Edsel" flops and forgives them! We have this promise from Psalm 103:12, that, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *BRF Witness*, Vol. 40, No. 6.

SWORD AND TRUMPET

# “What Did You Say?”

by Ben Waldner

“Could you say that again?”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t hear what you said. Could you repeat that?”

“Would you increase the volume? I have trouble hearing you.”

An older friend recently related to me that as a young person he thought, *When I am older and have lots of money, it will be neat to stand around and jingle coins in my pocket.* Then he said humorously, “Now I’m older and jingle the coins, but I can’t hear it.”

Sometimes people have difficulty hearing what others say for various reasons. For older people it may be due to their hearing apparatus wearing out. The middle-aged one’s ear may be insensitive to the spoken word due to excessive noise over an extended period of time. And young people’s ears may be damaged by blaring music numerous decibels too loud for the human ear to sustain. Quite possibly, the greatest hindrance to quality hearing is excessive foreign matter in the passage to the middle ear.

While these are obvious problems and do affect the communication process, there are matters of the heart—not so obvious—that also affect one’s ability to hear. What are they—not so obvious—matters of the heart that hinder proper listening? Let me suggest four:

One hindrance to good hearing is an *unwillingness* to hear. This simply means I don’t want to hear what you have to say. It is in essence saying, “I have closed the door of my ears to you” (see Matt. 13:15). Quarreling and verbal explosions reveal a closed ear *and* a closed heart. When the passageway to the heart is closed, the ear is greatly affected.

A second hindrance to proper hearing is *indifference*. This is evident by droopy eyelids, frequent yawning, and being easily distracted. Indifference loudly communicates, “I don’t care about you or what you have to say.”

A third hindrance to quality hearing is *speaking*. It is difficult to hear someone else

if you do all the talking. Frequent interruptions, finishing sentences for others, and always having the last word, are indicators of a loose tongue. Some people feel more comfortable talking than listening, but we tend to learn more from the latter than the former.

A fourth hindrance to good hearing is “*meism*.” The definition for “meism” is, I like talking about me. An illustration may help. After a twenty-minute update about his life and activities one man said to his friend, “Enough about me. Now you tell me about me.” Whether it is by doing all the talking (about yourself), steering the conversation to talk about yourself, or constantly referring to yourself, the equation is the same: ME!

How does one overcome these subtle hindrances to hearing? What are qualities to cultivate that will enhance your ability to hear?

A sure way of enhancing your ability to hear is to remove the obstructions. Whether the obstruction is physical or spiritual, root it out. The physician of the body may be well qualified to remove the excess foreign matter in the middle ear, while the Physician of the soul is surely capable of unstoping the spiritual ear. Cultivate humility by consciously choosing to listen to what others have to say. Resist the temptation to argue. To clarify your understanding of another’s point of view, restate it in your own words. A mark of a wise man (woman) is his willingness to hear, and as a result, his learning is increased (Proverbs 1:5).

A second quality to cultivate that enhances the ability to hear is compassion for others. A sympathetic consciousness of another’s distress, coupled with a desire to alleviate it, communicates volumes. This includes putting aside my own distress or sacrificing my own comfort. It means to “walk in the shoes of the other person,” and in a timely and appropriate manner guide them to the person of Jesus Christ. This is nothing less than “putting on the Lord

Jesus Christ” (Colossians 3:10-14).

A third quality that enhances our ability to hear is the practice of good listening. James writes, “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak” (not referring to the speed of our speech). A 2007 English paraphrase could read: “Be ready to hear, slow to speak . . .” This simply means, when you ask someone a question, wait for their reply. Not all people are gifted with words, and many *are learning* to communicate their thoughts with words. Let them practice on you. Give them your time. Listen attentively. Lay aside the interesting article you are reading. Look at the person speaking to you (if possible), but avoid staring.

Quality hearing is a blessing. Hindrances can be removed so that sensitivity can be restored. While few would claim perfect hearing, many would recognize the need for greater sensitivity of ear. If the quality of your hearing would increase by 10% every year, imagine how that would affect your ability to hear people. Imagine how that would affect your ability to hear God!

“I’m sorry. I missed that. Could you say that again?” ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Deeper Life Ministries Newsletter*, October 2007.

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**EDITORIAL COMMENT:** *While we oppose exposing our families to worldly media, it is interesting to note that even according to the surveys of the world, the media has it wrong.*

## For Youths, Relationships Trump Sex

by Kelly Boggs

MTV and the Associated Press recently released the results of an in-depth study concerning the “nature of happiness” among America’s young people. Researchers were surprised to find that family and parents were significant factors in determining a young person’s happiness. Sex, however, conspicuously was absent.

In fact, young people who indicated they were sexually active were found to have significantly lower levels of happiness than those who were chaste.

The joint online venture took place over a seven-month period and consisted of 1,280 young people ages 13 to 24. The 100-question survey covered a variety of subjects ranging from family and friends to school and sex.

One question asked, “What one thing in life makes you most happy?” Forty-six percent indicated spending time with family, friends, spouse/loved ones or children. Sex was mentioned by less than one percent of the respondents.

When it came to religion and/or spirituality, 44 percent said it is either very important or the single most important thing in their lives. Another 21 percent indicated it is “somewhat important.” More than 10 percent indicated that God was their “hero” and five percent said that God was the “thing in life” that makes them most happy.

Seventy-nine percent of young people answered “does not apply” when asked if drugs make them happy or unhappy. When the same question was posed in reference to alcohol, 55 percent replied “does not apply.”

While the aforementioned are just a sampling of the responses, they nonetheless are indicative of the entire survey, which gives a picture of young people who are more turned on by parents, friends, and religion than they are by sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

While there are still too many teens who are sexually active, drinking, and doing drugs, the MTV/AP survey does provide some positive news about America’s youth.

What should we think about the survey?

First of all, it seems that the media may not have as much influence over teenagers as once thought. Today’s young people are very media savvy. The MTV/AP survey suggests that many of them are able to see through the smoke and mirrors of televised raunch and discern what is real and lasting.

Another takeaway is that parents and family matter. So, don’t throw in the towel and ship your teens off to boarding school

*(continued on page 28)*

# So Long, Four-Part Singing?

by Dick Benner

Visiting a Mennonite church for the first time, they stopped dead in their worship participation and just listened to the four-part singing. They couldn't stop talking about it as we visited after the worship service.

"We've never heard anything so beautiful," they enthused.

Orrin, a Wall Street advertising account executive, and his wife, Kathy, a college librarian, were friends from our newspaper days in central Pennsylvania. Raised in strict Lutheran homes, they both knew and appreciated the great tradition of hymnody of their own communion but had never heard hymns sung so harmoniously by all participants of a congregation.

They couldn't stop talking about it. Eventually going our separate ways, but keeping in touch over the years, they repeatedly came back to this milestone experience.

The music of that lazy summer morning in the Shenandoah Valley kept ringing in their ears for a lifetime.

That was more than 30 years ago, and music styles have changed drastically in our tradition. Thinking harmony singing too quaint and culturally unappealing to our neighbors, many congregations have opted for the praise band as a more upbeat, exciting music style for worship. Many times this change has come at a cost. Music has sometimes been more divisive than uniting in our faith communities.

An outside observer could easily get the impression we have all but lost the art of four-part singing. But have we?

"More than half of our listeners are non-Mennonite," said John L. Horst, host of a 90-minute radio program in Harrisonburg on Sunday morning called *Mostly Mennonite*, *Mostly A Cappella*, based on an unscientific survey of his call-ins. "They tell me they listen to the program on the way to

church because 'we find the music far more interesting than that at our own church.' "

Arbitron ratings show that Horst's Sunday morning show has the highest listenership of all the WEMC programs, said the station manager.

Why is our interest fading in something our neighbors are now taking notice of? Horst, while not writing off the new styles of worship, said the focus of the praise band highlights the musicians up front rather than the communal experience of everyone worshipping in the pew.

And, contrary to popular opinion, it might be our young people who are finding new stimulus in harmony singing.

"A *cappella* music is the recognition that the voice is the first and primary instrument," said Ken Nafziger, professor of music at Eastern Mennonite University and co-author of *Singing, a Mennonite Voice*. "It is an important part of nearly every culture of the world, if not all of them."

Two threats to a *cappella* singing, he said, are "our cultural bias to being observers rather than participants and all the electronic gadgetry to which we have access, allowing little or no space for an individual's voice."

One of the most important gifts of a *cappella* and four-part singing, he said, is the gift of knowing that one's voice has a place in the congregation.

"One who sings this way knows, whether it's acknowledged or not, that his or her voice does indeed contribute to the whole, no matter how good, bad, or indifferent that individual voice might be," Nafziger said.

While this might seem small, he said, "It's a very major gift of the tradition." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Mennonite Weekly Review*



## 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.*

### Another Year Is Dawning

Christian Hymnal, #631

by Havergal/Wesley



**Lyrics:** For many people, the beginning of a new year is a time to think more deeply than normal about life. It is a time to think about what one has done with the past year and also to plan for the future. Often questions about the meaning and purpose of life seem more pertinent at this time of year than at others. The poem that Frances Havergal wrote to put on her New Year cards captures the Christian perspective of the occasion.

The first verse opens with the request that whatever else happens, the next year can be “Another year with Thee.” As Christians, this should be our number one “New Year’s Resolution.” In fact, if we are committed to walking with God and following His will in everything, the other goals that this hymn talks about will be met. The last line of the first stanza is also worth a special note. Havergal asks that the year be one of “proving Thy presence all the days.” Although God has revealed Himself through His Word and His creation, the real “proof” of His existence is His work in the lives of people who trust Him.

The third stanza brings out an interesting point in the second line: “Another year of training for holier work above.” Part of what this life is all about is growing more

and more into the image of God, in essence preparing us for living in His presence through eternity.

The hymn closes with a passage very much like the opening lines, and it ends with the desire that this be “Another year for Thee.” Many of us become focused on what God can do for us, and we forget that our goal should be to live for Him.

**Music:** Charles Wesley, the great hymnwriter and brother of John Wesley, was a better poet than he was a father. His son Samuel was a very unstable man, who wrote music for the church, but dabbled in freemasonry. He married Charlotte Louise Martin, but had an extended affair with a servant girl, which produced seven children. One of these children was Samuel Sebastian Wesley, the composer of the music for this hymn.<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Jr. started his musical career as a choir boy, but was soon playing the organ and composing music. Almost all of his music was composed for the Church of England. He held the position of organist in several different churches throughout England. This tune was published with a book of his hymns in 1864.<sup>2</sup> ■

1. [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org)

2. [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org)

# Another Year Is Dawning

*"His merciful kindness is great toward us." — Psalm 117:2*

FRANCES R. HAVERGAL, 1836-1879

SAMUEL S. WESLEY, 1810-1876



1. An - oth - er year is dawn - ing, Dear Fa - ther, let it be,  
2. An - oth - er year of mer - cies, Of faith - ful - ness and grace,  
3. An - oth - er year of serv - ice, Of wit - ness for Thy love,



In work - ing or in wait - ing, An - oth - er year with Thee;  
An - oth - er year of glad - ness The glo - ry of Thy face;  
An - oth - er year of train - ing For ho - lier work a - bove.



An - oth - er year of prog - ress, An - oth - er year of praise,  
An - oth - er year of lean - ing Up - on Thy lov - ing breast,  
An - oth - er year is dawn - ing, Dear Fa - ther, let it be,



An - oth - er year of prov - ing Thy pres - ence all the days;  
An - oth - er year of trust - ing, Of qui - et, hap - py rest, —  
On earth, or else in heav - en, An - oth - er year for Thee.



# Music That Glorifies God

by Kristopher Kreider

Music is a gift from God. As creatures of choice, men have the ability to use this gift in a right or wrong way. Because music is a God-given gift, we are responsible to use it for His glory.

Music is not passive; it draws a response from its participants. The response it draws is either spiritually upbuilding or detrimental. One's music appreciation indicates his spiritual health.

From the beginning of time, singing has been an important part of praising God. How the universe must have rung when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy at the laying of the foundation of the earth (Job 38:4-7)! We glorify God when we praise Him for His love, mercy, justice, holiness, and power.

## ***What Are Some Characteristics of Music That Glorifies God?***

*Singing that springs from a heart redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.* "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so" (Psalm 107:2). Raising our voices in songs of praise is one way of identifying ourselves as children of God. Music that rises from a pure heart will not be tainted with selfishness and pride. Our music must be an expression of an inner experience rather than an attempt to externally stimulate good feeling. Without the real cause of joy being present, the motions of praise will fall short of bringing glory to God. A heart out of tune with its Maker cannot render acceptable praise to God.

Instrumental music falls far short because no instrument made by man has been filled with joy because of salvation from sin. Many years ago C. H. Spurgeon wrote, "One broken note from a grateful heart must have more real praise in it than all the wind which sweeps through whistling pipes."

*Singing that directs a proper response to truth.* Man is a threefold being, namely,

spirit, soul, and body. The spirit is capable of worship and divine communion. The soul is the essence of life and regulates our emotions and actions. The body is the physical part, wherein the five senses operate.

Each of these three parts of man responds to different aspects of music. The spirit responds to the message of the song. The soul of man is attracted to the literary and artistic content of the song. The body of man, because it includes the senses, is affected by the rhythm of music.

Because man worships in spirit, the message of our songs should never be undermined by the artistry of catchy or outstanding words, phrases, or music arrangements. Undue repetition, slurs, and special arrangements tend to draw the mind from the message of the song. Also, when the beat is predominant, the message is automatically undermined. A heavy beat will not send us heavenward, but a spirit strengthened by truth will.

Neither should we count on the beauty of music to inspire a worshipful attitude within us. No matter how beautifully and majestically the music swells, if there is no love for God in our heart, we become as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Because there is no worship without truth, the songs we sing must be doctrinally sound. Songs that portray an easy Christianity without discipleship should not be a part of our singing or listening diet. Songs that cheapen the love of Christ or lessen His sufferings are not Biblical and will not increase our devotion to God.

*Singing that is an expression of our spiritual experience.* Have we sung the words "Choose my path, O blessed Saviour" even though we knew that we had not submitted to the path He had chosen for us? We are not really being honest if we do not mean the words we sing. But as we allow the message of the song to challenge us, our

commitment to truth deepens when singing.

In times of sorrow and grief, many hearts have found comfort and courage in verbalizing their faith in God through song. Many songs contain Bible promises that bring rest to the weary and strength to the feeble.

*Singing that extols the greatness of our God.* Music will bring attention to something or someone. Who is more worthy than our God? Some music is arranged so that a singer's voice is very dominant. Sometimes songs are sung with such obvious emphasis on exactness and perfection that we wonder who is receiving the most attention, God or those singing.

When we sing of the greatness of God in song, we reflect on the vast gap between His perfection and our imperfection. As we

sense our need, we reach out to Him for His power to help us be what He wants us to be.

Singing must be a spiritual exercise. Through song our little children learn that "Jesus Loves Me." The songs we sing convict sinners and admonish and comfort saints. Countless times a song that clinched the truth of the preceding sermon has cemented its truth in memory.

The music of our songs must be servant to the words. When the mood of the tune complements the thoughts of the words, an influence for truth works mightily in the minds of those entering into the song.

As we choose our music carefully, someday we and those we influence can join in singing the eternal "song of the Lamb." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*, October 2007

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## Do You See What I See?

by Harry F. Wood

I have observed it is challenging to be a contrarian without being cantankerous; to disagree on principles without becoming disagreeable. Often people's views reflect more a resistance to change than a thoughtful disagreement. Because of that, emotions can run high and thoughtful dialogue low. Quickly we can all become testy. This can be especially true when we are seeking to muddle our way through murky waters.

The Christian Church as I know it has been riding on one long pendulum swing. While my exposure has always been much broader, my roots amidst it have been in the soil of what is commonly identified as the Holiness movement. In the early years it seemed to me the goal within this movement was to be spiritual isolationists; not only distantly removed from the "world" but sometimes just plain weird. For some the weirdness appeared to be embraced as a badge of true spirituality.

In the role of ministry leader I was quick to throw off this persuasion. I was quick to tear down barriers—to swing open the doors of the community of faith. We sought to let the gospel out and the sinner in. There was within my thinking an unspoken recognition that in order for sinners to become saints a connection of grace must occur. Once grace connected from one heart to another, transformation through Jesus Christ became possible.

The open door policy in church ministry gradually created what I choose to call the tide effect. When the spiritual life of the church was elevated, the tide of the church was high and the outward flow of the grace of God would pour out of the church doors. It would run in the streets of the community until it began to affect the hearts of some with divine transformation. The living water of the Spirit washed across people's lives and its impact was evident.

Eventually I came to realize the tide moved both ways. For the tide not only moved outward from the church, but also back. The flow of the Spirit would diminish within the church and the rising tide of society would begin backfilling into the church. The impact was gradually apparent; the debris of community dysfunction and spiritual chaos began to do its own transformation. The impact of the supernatural grace of God was eroded by the persistence of natural attrition. What was meant for good began to have an erosive influence. I do not think this is true in every place, nor happens out of necessity. But it does occur in far too many settings to be ignored.

The impact became visible in many ways. Biblical and historical features of divine transformation were replaced with human accommodation. Biblical authority was eroded and replaced with human judgment, marriage covenants dismissed with little consequence, sexual indiscretions and pornographic addiction became common practices, alternative lifestyles were first tolerated and gradually embraced, lifestyle practices once rejected were now championed.

I have listened to people assuring me that they “have prayed about it” and now they are convinced God has approved their abortion, a divorce or extra-marital relationship, their weakness for pornography, alternative lifestyle, practices of social activities, and practices that they once rejected. Culture has stamped its insignia on their lives.

When does the “tipping point” come in the church where we need grace’s transformation rather than being an instrument of it?

Some seeking to achieve cultural relevance and connection would be quick to applaud our new church status, to declare this a triumph. The place where we have finally moved from isolation to integration; from weird to fashionable! The holy huddle of the past has been swapped for the cultural embrace.

There is no question the church is a more comfortable place for many nonbelievers today. The spirit of welcome, acceptance,

and lifestyle identification is inviting. The church now speaks the language, echoes the music, dresses the style, and even constructs its buildings all with an outsider in view. In many places you can feel right at home in the church with little alteration of your non-Christian ways. The church in one generation has taken a quantum leap toward those outside its doors.

The question exists, When does the intruding tide change the very character of the church? Transformation can occur in both directions: While the church seeks to remove barriers by adjusting to the way life is done outside its doors, it must avoid letting those it is seeking to redeem from radically altering its ministry agenda. In some cases the guests have transformed the church’s living space to make it feel like home to them. We have been so busy fighting “worship wars” or striving to “build” our congregations we have often turned our head from the character erosion.

There is now a tremendous amount of pressure to transform the ministry of the church from convictional and confrontational to affirming and embracing; the church has become the ultimate group hug. Is it possible that the church is in the process of being submerged by the incoming tide of social debris? If that happens will the church lose its transformational impact within society? Are we afraid of saying “no” to an influx of persons we have spoiled by our catering ways?

Can we say no to lessening the authority of Scripture; no to alternative lifestyles that the Bible clearly forbids; no to styles of ministry that minimize teaching of truth and maximize entertainment; no to lifestyle endorsements that are destructive?

When does cultural identification go too far? Is it possible for the hosting body of the church to lose its own identity in trying to accommodate its guests? Is there a tipping point? If I were God that answer would be easy, but obviously I am not.

This is not a small vs. large tension; that is not the issue that concerns me. Rather, it is that we are getting better and better at

making church comfortable for the unbeliever but having less and less of a transformational impact on our society. Are we creating a whole new generation of people with enough religious sophistication to bridge the world/church gap but not enough of Christ to experience His holy transformation? According to George Barna's research, our people are not being renewed by the transforming of their minds.

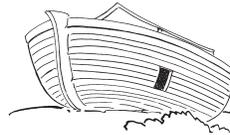
I believe it is time for us to revisit the foun-

dational principles of what it truly means for the church to be the church in a pagan culture. Cultural identification presumes compatibility. As the people of God, do we continue an unholy dance in partnership with a spiritually decadent culture about us; or, do we strive for a stark character contrast that provides a revolutionary, true alternative life to be found in Jesus Christ? ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Faith in the Future*, March-April 2007



## Beginning Issues



# Races or People Groups? (Part 2)

by John Mullett

In the last article I introduced the issue of racism and gave something of an overview of the subject and the biblical perspective of only one race. In this article let's look at some of the scientific evidence.

Consider the following excerpts taken from Chapter 17 (*Are There Really Different Races?*) of *The New Answers Book*.<sup>1</sup>

... All human beings today are classified as homo sapiens sapiens. Scientists today admit that, biologically, there is only one race of humans.<sup>2</sup>

For instance a scientist at the Advancement of Science Convention in Atlanta stated, "Race is a social construct derived mainly from perceptions conditioned by events of recorded history and it has no basis in biological reality." This person went on to say, "Curiously enough, the idea comes very close to being of American manufacture."<sup>3</sup>

Reporting on research conducted on the concept of race, ABC News stated, "More and more scientists find that the differences that set us apart are cultural, not racial. Some even say that the word race should be abandoned because it's meaningless." The article went on to say that "we accept the idea of race because it's a convenient way of putting people into broad categories, frequently to suppress them—the most hideous example was provided by Hitler's Germany. And racial prejudice remains common throughout the world."<sup>4</sup>

At first glance it may appear there are significant differences among the people groups: differences such as hair type and color, eye shape, skin color, etc. . . . But these so-called "racial" differences that seem so obvious to us (we've been trained to notice them) actually make up only 0.012 percent of human biological variation. If we were to

take any two people in the world the genetic differences between those two people would be about 0.2 percent regardless if they were from different people groups or from the same people group.<sup>5</sup>

Skin color itself turns out to be a very insignificant difference. While there are other factors such as blood vessels close to the surface that can help determine skin color, scientists have confirmed there really is only one major pigment that produces our skin color; it's called melanin. There are two forms of it called *eumelanin* (brown to black) and *pheomelanin* (red to yellow) that combine to give our shade of skin.<sup>6</sup> We are not really different in color but different in shade from light to dark based on volume of melanin produced and the density of its concentration in our skin. Melanin is actually produced for our protection. When we are exposed to sunlight a normal healthy gene produces more eumelanin and we "tan" or darken up. Those who have lighter skin or cannot tan can get sunburned much more easily and are more vulnerable to skin cancers.

The differences in eye shapes also turn out to be rather insignificant genetically. "*Individuals whose DNA codes for an extra layer of adipose tissue around the eyes have almond-shaped eyes (this is common among Asian people groups). All people groups have adipose tissue around the eyes, some simply have more or less.*"<sup>7</sup>

While we have been trained by our culture to notice these so-called "racial" differences, the Bible tells us that God "hath made of *one blood*<sup>8</sup> all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth," (Acts 17:26a, KJV) and in 1 Samuel 16:7b "for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (KJV). Should we not have the same worldview as our Creator? We will continue looking at the evidence on the "races" in the next article. ■

1. Ken Ham, *The New Answers Book*, Master Books © Answers in Genesis 2006.

2. Ken Ham, Chapter 17 (p. 222), *Are There Really Different Races? The New Answers Book*, Master Books.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid, p. 225.

6. Ibid, p. 227.

7. Ibid, p. 229.

8. Emphasis mine.

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## For Youths . . . cont'd. from page 20

in Siberia just yet. Keep having meals together. Keep spending time with them. And yes, as corny as it may seem, plan a family time. Do things together. It seems that today's young people really do believe that fathers and mothers know best.

The survey also makes it clear that among today's young people, God is anything but dead. There is a keen interest in spiritual things. Churches need to heed this bit of information and strengthen their efforts to reach out to young people with content that can help quench their spiritual thirst.

One aspect of the study that I found interesting had to do with sex—or rather, its relative unimportance. Sex is not the be-all, end-all for today's youth.

However, if you survey today's music, television, and movies you will find them saturated with sex, sex, and more sex. And while most youth consume it, it seems they might be open to something other than sex-charged media.

A case in point was the success of the Disney Channel's "High School Musical" in 2006 and its recently-aired sequel "High School Musical 2." The former garnered 7.7 million viewers and boasted the top selling album of 2006. The latter had 17.2 million viewers which made it the highest-rated cable broadcast of all time. The most telling characteristic of both movies is that they were clean. There was not a hint of raunch or sleaze. And they were wildly successful. Young people respond to decent media when it is offered.

Will MTV heed the results of its own survey and abandon its sexualized content? After all, we have long been told the media doesn't influence behavior, it just reflects it. Well, according to its own survey, MTV is not doing either very well. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Pulpit Helps*

# We've Got Rhythm— But Is It the Right Kind?

by Christine Sine

Our God is a God of seasons, a God of rhythm. But in the modern world, our daily rhythms increasingly run counter to those of the natural world: strawberries and central heating in the winter, apples and air conditioning in the summer. At dusk, I turn on the lights and extend the day. These modern “innovations” all make it possible to ignore God’s patterns.

For many of us, the essential rhythms necessary for a healthy spiritual life have also been severely disrupted. We have become so accustomed to letting the culture control the pace and flow of our lives that we are convinced these artificial rhythms are normal. We no longer fast during Lent but go on obsessive spring diets instead. Life flows to the rhythms of sales at the mall or to hockey playoffs, rather than to our connection to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

## ***Pressure to Plug-In***

The growing pressure we all face to be plugged into our work 24/7 is even more disruptive to God’s rhythms in our lives. Our culture tells us there is never time to slow down, take a break, or simply turn off. It sells us “time-saving” innovations that only serve to crank up the pace. Jet travel rapidly zips us across continents. Cell phones and e-mail instantly link us to friends and colleagues half a world away at any time of day or night. The 24-hour e-commerce and ATM machines reinforce the frantic beat.

Even on our days off or vacation we feel we can no longer disconnect. How many of us still check our e-mail every day no matter where we are or what we are doing?

In our frenzied efforts to remain plugged in, we drown out all other rhythms and retain little or no space for our spiritual life.

So, what are the essential rhythms God intended to pace our lives? We need look no further than the life of Christ, who in offer-

ing us abundant life also models the rhythms of such a life.

Jesus modeled four basic rhythms that I believe are still meant to set the pace and pattern for our lives.

## ***Prayer***

Christ’s intimate relationship with God and dedicated prayer life provided the focus for everything else He did. Jesus sought God’s direction and lived His life according to God’s instructions. Daily prayer to reconnect us to God and renew our spiritual energy, pausing in our decision-making to listen to God, and taking time for prayer retreats will enrich our lives and bring us into a more intimate relationship with God. How much less stress would we suffer if we gave this kind of priority to prayer?

## ***Community***

Jesus’ second priority was community. He spent more time developing a community of followers than He did preaching. He could often be found in a crowd with His twelve disciples, teaching and reaching out with compassion.

But Jesus and His disciples didn’t only work together. They enjoyed good food and fellowship and celebrated the Jewish feasts. Wherever Jesus went there was a party. Making time for friends and family; encouraging co-workers, neighbors, and fellow believers; enjoying the celebrations of our faith: God intends all of these to be part of the spiritual rhythm of our lives.

## ***Work***

The third rhythm that paced Jesus’ life was work, but the goal of His work was less about putting bread on the table than about serving God’s kingdom purposes. Jesus wants us, as God’s representatives, to ask, “What is it that you want me to accomplish today that will further the purposes of your

***Don't  
you think  
God wants  
you to model  
a different  
way of  
life?***

kingdom in our world?" We don't all need to become pastors or missionaries, however. Think about how we could encourage a colleague at work, or offer a helping hand to an elderly person in our neighborhood.

### **Rest**

Jesus believed not only in work but also in rest, recognizing it as a necessary rhythm of life. He encouraged His followers, saying, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Regular sleep and the practice of Sabbath are both ways to reconnect to God's rhythm of rest and refreshment.

A young pastor in Denver told me that a member of his congregation recently asked him why he was always so busy. Thinking his parishioner wanted an account of his time, the pastor started listing all the activities that kept him constantly on the run—church, committee meetings, hospital visits, family, and friends.

"No, no," the man interrupted, "that's not what I meant. Why are you so busy? Don't you think God wants you to model a different way of life?" The question stopped him short and soon had him rethinking his priorities and the shape he'd allowed his life to take.

The rhythm of life Jesus modeled is not just something for the dark, distant past. It's a guide for our lives today. People are looking for evidence that Jesus' disciples invest their time and energy in a different range of priorities than the culture around them. They are looking for a faith with a different rhythm to life—a rhythm that is fulfilling and not exhausting. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, Sept. 2006

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**EDITORIAL COMMENT:** *It is unusual for S&T to publish an article of this sort. However, we believe that some balance is needed in our discussions on this topic. If we allow our theology to be improperly affected by the "tree huggers," we do our constituency a great disservice.*

## **Global Warming: Man-Made or Natural?**

by S. Fred Singer

In the past few years there has been increasing concern about global climate change on the part of the media, politicians, and the public. It has been stimulated by the idea that human activities may influence global climate adversely and that therefore corrective action is required on the part of governments. Recent evidence suggests that this concern is misplaced. Human activities are not influencing the global climate in a perceptible way. Climate will continue to change, as it always has in the past, warming and cooling on different time scales and for different reasons, regardless of human action. I would also

argue that—should it occur—a modest warming would be on the whole beneficial.

This is not to say that we don't face a serious problem. But the problem is political. Because of the mistaken idea that governments can and must do something about climate, pressures are building that have the potential of distorting energy policies in a way that will severely damage national economies, decrease standards of living, and increase poverty. This misdirection of resources will adversely affect human health and welfare in industrialized nations, and even more in developing nations. Thus it could well lead to increased

social tensions within nations and conflict between them.

If not for this economic and political damage, one might consider the present concern about climate change nothing more than just another environmentalist fad, like the Alar apple scare or the global cooling fears of the 1970s. Given that so much is at stake, however, it is essential that people better understand the issue.

### ***Man-Made Warming?***

The most fundamental question is scientific: Is the observed warming of the past 30 years due to natural causes or are human activities a main or even a contributing factor?

At first glance, it is quite plausible that humans could be responsible for warming the climate. After all, the burning of fossil fuels to generate energy releases large quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The CO<sub>2</sub> level has been increasing steadily since the beginning of the industrial revolution and is now 35 percent higher than it was 200 years ago. Also, we know from direct measurements that CO<sub>2</sub> is a “greenhouse gas” which strongly absorbs infrared (heat) radiation. So the idea that burning fossil fuels causes an enhanced “greenhouse effect” needs to be taken seriously.

But in seeking to understand recent warming, we also have to consider the natural factors that have regularly warmed the climate. After all, the geological record shows a persistent 1,500-year-cycle of warming and cooling.

In identifying the burning of fossil fuels as the chief cause of warming today, many politicians and environmental activists simply appeal to a so-called “scientific consensus.” There are two things wrong with this: First, there is no such consensus: An increasing number of climate scientists are raising serious questions about the political rush to judgment on this issue. For example, the widely touted “consensus” of 2,500 scientists on the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

is an illusion: Most of the panelists have no scientific qualifications, and many of the others object to some part of the IPCC’s report. The Associated Press reported recently that only 52 climate scientists contributed to the report’s “Summary for Policymakers.”

Likewise, only about a dozen members of the governing board voted on the “consensus statement” on climate change by the American Meteorological Society (AMS). Rank and file AMS scientists never had a say, which is why so many of them are now openly rebelling. Estimates of skepticism within the AMS regarding man-made global warming are well over 50 percent.

The second reason not to rely on a “scientific consensus” in these matters is that this is not how science works. After all, scientific advances customarily come from a minority of scientists who challenge the majority view—or even just a single person (think of Galileo or Einstein). Science proceeds by the scientific method and draws conclusions based on evidence, not on a show of hands.

But aren’t glaciers melting? Isn’t sea ice shrinking? Yes, but that’s not proof for human-caused warming. Any kind of warming, whether natural or human-caused, will melt ice. To assert that melting glaciers prove human causation is just bad logic.

What about the fact that carbon dioxide levels are increasing at the same time temperatures are rising? That’s an interesting correlation; but as every scientist knows, correlation is not causation. During much of the last century the climate was *cooling* while CO<sub>2</sub> levels were rising. And we should note that the climate has not warmed in the past eight years, even though greenhouse gas levels have increased rapidly.

What about the fact—as cited by, among others, those who produced the IPCC report—that every major greenhouse computer model (there are two dozen or so) shows a large temperature increase due to human burning of fossil fuels? Fortunately, there is a scientific way of testing these models to see whether current warming is

due to a man-made greenhouse effect. It involves comparing the actual or observed *pattern* of warming with the warming pattern predicted by or calculated from the models. Essentially, we try to see if the “fingerprints” match—“fingerprints” meaning the rates of warming at different latitudes and altitudes.

For instance, theoretically, greenhouse warming in the tropics should register at increasingly high rates as one moves from the surface of the earth up into the atmosphere, peaking at about six miles above the earth’s surface. At that point, the level should be greater than at the surface by about a factor of three and quite pronounced, according to all the computer models. In reality, however, there is no increase at all. In fact, the data from balloon-borne radiosondes show the very opposite: a slight *decrease* in warming over the equator.

The fact that the observed and predicted patterns of warming don’t match indicates that the man-made greenhouse contribution to current temperature change is insignificant. This fact emerges from data and graphs collected in the Climate Change Science Program Report 1.1, published by the federal government in April 2006 (see [www.climate-science.gov/Library/sap/sap1-1/finalreport/default.htm](http://www.climate-science.gov/Library/sap/sap1-1/finalreport/default.htm)). It is remarkable and puzzling that few have noticed this disparity between observed and predicted patterns of warming and drawn the obvious scientific conclusion.

What explains why greenhouse computer models predict temperature trends that are so much larger than those observed? The answer lies in the proper evaluation of feedback within the models. Remember that in addition to carbon dioxide, the real atmosphere contains water vapor, the most powerful greenhouse gas. Every one of the climate models calculates a significant positive feedback from water vapor—i.e., a feedback that amplifies the warming effect of the CO<sub>2</sub> increase by an average factor of two or three. But it is quite possible that the water vapor feedback is negative rather

than positive and thereby *reduces* the effect of increased CO<sub>2</sub>.

There are several ways this might occur. For example, when increased CO<sub>2</sub> produces a warming of the ocean, a higher rate of evaporation might lead to more humidity and cloudiness (provided the atmosphere contains a sufficient number of cloud condensation nuclei). These low clouds reflect incoming solar radiation back into space and thereby cool the earth. Climate researchers have discovered other possible feedbacks and are busy evaluating which ones enhance and which diminish the effect of increasing CO<sub>2</sub>.

### ***Natural Causes of Warming***

A quite different question, but scientifically interesting, has to do with the natural factors influencing climate. This is a big topic about which much has been written. Natural factors include continental drift and mountain-building, changes in the earth’s orbit, volcanic eruptions, and solar variability. Different factors operate on different time scales. But on a time scale important for human experience—a scale of decades, let’s say—solar variability may be the most important.

Solar influence can manifest itself in different ways: fluctuations of solar irradiance (total energy), which has been measured in satellites and related to the sunspot cycle; variability of the ultraviolet portion of the solar spectrum, which in turn affects the amount of ozone in the stratosphere; and variations in the solar wind that modulate the intensity of cosmic rays (which, upon impact into the earth’s atmosphere, produce cloud condensation nuclei, affecting cloudiness and thus climate).

Scientists have been able to trace the impact of the sun on past climate using proxy data (since thermometers are relatively modern). A conventional proxy for temperature is the ratio of the heavy isotope of oxygen, Oxygen-18, to the most common form, Oxygen-16.

A paper published in *Nature* in 2001 describes the Oxygen-18 data (reflecting

temperature) from a stalagmite in a cave in Oman, covering a period of over 3,000 years. It also shows corresponding Carbon-14 data, which are directly related to the intensity of cosmic rays striking the earth's atmosphere. One sees there a remarkably detailed correlation, almost on a year-by-year basis. While such research cannot establish the detailed mechanism of climate change, the casual connection is quite clear: Since the stalagmite temperature cannot affect the sun, it is the sun that affects climate.

### ***Policy Consequences***

If this line of reasoning is correct, human-caused increases in the CO<sub>2</sub> level are quite insignificant to climate change. Natural causes of climate change, for their part, cannot be controlled by man. They are unstoppable. Several policy consequences would follow from this simple fact:

- ▶ Regulation of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is pointless and even counterproductive, in that no matter what kind of mitigation scheme is used, such regulation is hugely expensive.
- ▶ The development of non-fossil fuel energy sources, like ethanol and hydrogen, might be counterproductive, given that they have to be manufactured, often with the investment of great amounts of ordinary energy. Nor do they offer much reduction in oil imports.
- ▶ Wind power and solar power become less attractive, being uneconomic and requiring huge subsidies.
- ▶ Substituting natural gas for coal in electricity generation makes less sense for the same reasons.

None of this is intended to argue against energy conservation. On the contrary, conserving energy reduces waste, saves money, and lowers energy prices—irrespective of what one may believe about global warming.

### ***Science vs. Hysteria***

You will note that this has been a rational discussion. We asked the important question of whether there is appreciable man-made warming today. We presented

evidence that indicates there is not, thereby suggesting that attempts by governments to control greenhouse-gas emissions are pointless and unwise. Nevertheless, we have state governors calling for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions limits on cars; we have city mayors calling for mandatory CO<sub>2</sub> controls; we have the Supreme Court declaring CO<sub>2</sub> a pollutant that may have to be regulated; we have every industrialized nation (with the exception of the U.S. and Australia) signed on to the Kyoto Protocol; and we have ongoing international demands for even more stringent controls when Kyoto expires in 2012. What's going on here?

To begin, perhaps even some of the advocates of these anti-warming policies are not so serious about them, as seen in a feature of the Kyoto Protocol called the Clean Development Mechanism, which allows a CO<sub>2</sub> emitter—i.e., an energy user—to support a fanciful CO<sub>2</sub> reduction scheme in developing nations in exchange for the right to keep on emitting CO<sub>2</sub> unabated. “Emission trading” among those countries that have ratified Kyoto allows for the sale of certificates of unused emission quotas. In many cases, the initial quota was simply given away by governments to power companies and other entities, which in turn collect a windfall fee from consumers. All of this has become a huge financial racket that could someday make the UN's “Oil for Food” scandal in Iraq seem minor by comparison. Even more fraudulent, these schemes do not reduce total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions—not even in theory.

It is also worth noting that tens of thousands of interested persons benefit directly from the global warming scare—at the expense of the ordinary consumer. Environmental organizations globally, such as Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, and the Environmental Defense Fund, have raked in billions of dollars. Multi-billion-dollar government subsidies for useless mitigation schemes are large and growing. Emission trading programs will soon reach the \$100 billion a year level, with large fees paid to brokers and those who operate the scams.

In other words, many people have discovered they can benefit from climate scares and have formed an entrenched interest. Of course, there are also many sincere believers in an impending global warming catastrophe, spurred on in their fears by the growing number of one-sided books, movies, and media coverage.

The irony is that a slightly warmer climate with more carbon dioxide is in many ways beneficial rather than damaging. Economic studies have demonstrated that a modest warming and higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels will increase GNP and raise standards of living, primarily by improving agriculture and forestry. It's a well-known fact that CO<sub>2</sub> is plant food and essential to the growth of crops and trees—and ultimately to the well-being of animals and humans.

You wouldn't know it from Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, but there are many upsides to global warming: Northern homes could save on heating fuel. Canadian farmers could harvest bumper crops. Greenland may become awash in cod and oil riches. Shippers could count on an Arctic shortcut between the Atlantic and Pacific. Forests may expand. Mongolia could become an economic superpower. This is all speculative, even a little facetious. But still, might there be a silver lining for the frigid regions of Canada and Russia? "It's not that there won't be bad things happening in those countries," economics professor Robert O. Mendelsohn of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies says. "But the idea is that they will get such large gains, especially in agriculture, that they will be bigger than the losses." Mendelsohn has looked at how gross domestic product around the world would be affected under different warming scenarios through 2100. Canada and Russia tend to come out as clear gainers, as does much of northern Europe and Mongolia, largely because of projected increases in agricultural production.

To repeat a point made at the beginning: Climate has been changing cyclically and has shown huge variations over geological

time. Human beings have adapted well, and will continue to do so.

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The nations of the world face many difficult problems. Many have societal problems like poverty, disease, lack of sanitation, and shortage of clean water. There are grave security problems arising from global terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Any of these problems are vastly more important than the imaginary problem of man-made global warming. It is a great shame that so many of our resources are being diverted from real problems to this non-problem. Perhaps in ten or twenty years this will become apparent to everyone, particularly if the climate should stop warming (as it has for eight years now) or even begin to cool.

We can only trust that reason will prevail in the face of an onslaught of propaganda like Al Gore's movie and despite the incessant misinformation generated by the media. Today, the imposed costs are still modest, and mostly hidden in taxes and in charges for electricity and motor fuels. If the scaremongers have their way, these costs will become enormous. But I believe that sound science and good sense will prevail in the face of irrational and scientifically baseless climate fears. ■

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# The Light of the World

by Henry M. Morris

One of the most amazing statements ever made was the assertion of Jesus Christ in the temple in Jerusalem one early morning long ago, speaking to a group of bigoted religionists who were seeking an excuse to condemn Him. This claim should immediately have branded Him as either a raving lunatic or a conniving charlatan—or—(could it conceivably be true?) as the very Son of God Himself!

## ***The Amazing Claim***

Here is what He said: *“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”* (John 8:12).

A listener may have thought, “But, Sir, it is the mighty sun that illumines the world, not some wandering preacher from Galilee. The sun moving high in the sky provides light so that men do not have to walk around in the dark, so how can you claim to be the sun? The sun does, indeed, make life possible, with its radiant energy causing plants to grow and rivers to flow: it can certainly be said to be *‘the light of life.’* But how can *you*, of all creatures, claim to give life?”

“Oh,” His followers might reply, “He was just speaking metaphorically. He is the *spiritual* light, giving *spiritual* life, conquering *spiritual* darkness, not really claiming to produce sunlight.”

But that’s just as bad, isn’t it? This country preacher with no formal education and only a motley group of deluded followers! Yet here He is professing to provide the spiritual, as well as moral and intellectual guidance for the whole wide world, when neither He nor His disciples have ever even traveled beyond the borders of Israel! How could this Jesus, from Nazareth, possibly expect anyone to believe *that*?

## ***The Astounding Fulfillment***

Yet, for the past two thousand years there have indeed been millions of people from all over this whole wide world who have believed just that, and whose lives have been transformed because of it. Further, not only individual men and women have been transformed, but whole societies and cultures. Great educational institutions have been established in His name, as well as hospitals and charities of all kinds, not to mention multiplied thousands of churches and helpful ministries in great variety. Nations have been established to serve Him; even the worldwide evil of slavery has been almost abolished.

Most of the founding fathers of science were sincere followers of Jesus, as well as the greatest medical researchers of the past. The Lord Jesus Christ, even though despised by so many of His contemporaries that He was judicially executed in a uniquely cruel manner by their leaders, has indeed been the Light of the world ever since, not only spiritually, but also intellectually and morally. Those who choose to follow Him have not walked in darkness but gladly testify that they have found the Light of life, just as He promised.

But that is not all, by any means! By overcoming death and rising from His tomb in a glorified physical body (which many would evaluate as the best-proved fact in history), He proved Himself to be (as He also claimed) the omnipotent Son of God, equal with the heavenly Father—the very Word of God made flesh!

As His early disciples soon began to proclaim His authority, it was also He who had actually created all things. He was not the sun (the physical light of the world), but He is greater than the sun, for He created the sun! *“By him were all things created, that*

are in heaven” (Col. 1:16). “All things were made by him” (John 1:3). It was obvious that God, in the beginning, created heaven and earth, but He “created all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:9).

Not only was the physical light of the world—the sun—created by Christ, but it is He who has kept it shining ever since. It is the eternal Son of God— “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). “Who being the brightness of [God’s] glory, and the express image of his person” who is still “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1:3). Scientists are still somewhat uncertain as to what keeps the sun shining, though most of them promote the theory of thermonuclear fusion processes in its deep interior. There are unsolved difficulties even with this explanation, however, and no one really knows.

### **The Power of Light**

We do know, however, if we believe the Bible, that Jesus Christ the Creator is also the Conserver. He upholds everything by His own power! “By him all things consist” (Col. 1:17). Not only our sun, in fact, but all the suns of the cosmos! Indeed He is the light—not only of our little world, but of the entire physical universe! In the promised future new earth, in fact, with its magnificent holy city, we are told that the city will not even need the sun for its light, “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Rev. 21:23).

Note, incidentally, the anticipatory intimation in such verses of the modern scientific concept of the equivalence of mass and energy. Things are held together by power. And that power is nothing less than the power of Christ Himself. In Him, all things “consist” (literally “are sustained” or “hold together”). Our gentle, loving Saviour is the mighty Creator of all things who is now upholding all things and someday will restore all things to their primeval perfection.

As far as physical life is concerned, He also claimed that those who follow Him not

only would no longer “walk in darkness” but also would possess “the light of life.”

Modern physical science (at least classical physics) was centered around the electro-magnetic spectrum, which included all the varieties of force and energy in nature—light, heat, sound, electricity, magnetism, chemical energy, etc.—everything except gravity and nuclear energy. Light, of course, in a sense covers the whole spectrum, from long-wavelength infrared to short-wave ultraviolet radiation, with the visible light spectrum occupying the key center, as it were.

In a significant sense, light energy is thus the most basic energy of all, and it is not surprising that the first words recorded by the living Word of God were: “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3). There were no “lights” as such at that point, however, until He said: “Let there be lights” (Gen. 1:14). Then, instantaneously appeared in the sky the two great lights for the earth and “the stars also” (Gen. 1:16) scattered throughout the vast cosmos.

And all of these lights—and the light which they generated and sent forth to be “for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years” (Genesis 1:14)—would also serve life itself through the many marvelous mechanisms it would energize for Earth’s coming inhabitants (photosynthesis, etc.).

Thus it is that: “In him [that is, the Word of God] was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). It then follows also that Christ is “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9).

And that is true in both the physical sense and spiritual sense. Physically, “in him we live, and move, and have our being” so that He is “not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:28, 27). It should be painfully sobering for even those who refuse to believe on Him to realize suddenly (as they must, someday) that their very existence—even the cellular structure of their bodies—depends on His moment-by-moment maintenance. If He just withdrew His power for an instant we would collapse into