

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

Vol. LXXVI DECEMBER 2008 No. 12

THE 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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THE SWORD AND TRUMPET (USPS 615-540) is published monthly by *The Sword and Trumpet, Inc.*, P. O. Box 575, Harrisonburg, Va. 22803-0575. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisonburg, Va. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 1 year US \$15.00, 2 years US \$25.00. Bulk rates on the basis of US \$12.00 per year. Add US \$3.00 per year for countries outside USA and Canada. Telephone (540) 867-9419 or 867-9444. FAX (540) 867-9419. E-mail address: swandtrump@verizon.net.

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Person of the Month:

John H. Gochnauer (1877–1948)



The second of three sons, John H. Gochnauer was born April 9, 1877, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to Joseph Hersh and Anna Franck Gochnauer.

John received his formal schooling at Oak Grove School near his home. At the age of 18, having completed school, he attended Millersville State Normal School from 1895-96, whereupon he received his teacher's Provisional Certificate. However, at the same time he was called back to the home farm to help with the needs there and was never able to further pursue teaching. Having a good analytical mind, Gochnauer spent all of his spare time though, at home, reading to further educate himself.

In the fall of 1896 Brother Gochnauer came to Christ and in the spring of 1897 he joined the East Petersburg congregation. He then began faithfully serving as a Sunday school teacher.

On February 21, 1907, at the age of 29, John Gochnauer married Sadie Baymond Weidman of Manheim Township, Pennsylvania. The Lord blessed their family with two sons and a daughter; however, tragically, one of the sons died as a child.

After serving faithfully for many years teaching Sunday school, John was ordained August 15, 1922, at the age of 45, to serve as minister at his home church.

As a pastor, Brother Gochnauer was very interested in his flock and their spiritual growth. He would spend much time in meditation and prayer in preparation for his sermons. His counsel was "fatherly" and his personality enriched the lives of others. He worked hard in the Kingdom and was willing to experience hardship for the cause of Christ. He was concerned for purity of doctrine in the church and warned against the heresies of his day. During John's ministry the church not only saw souls saved and disciplined in the faith, but it experienced much numerical growth. There was also spiritual growth in the youth group.

Early in his ministry he had the opportunity to hold evangelistic meetings in his local area. The first meeting was held in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, and the final one, fifteen years later, was in Strasburg, Pennsylvania.

Gochnauer was also busy in Lancaster Conference. He was appointed to the Library Committee in 1925; the conference Tract Committee from 1934-1948; and as Vice-Chairman of the Board of Lancaster Mennonite School in 1942.

In the larger church he was appointed to the Publication Board of the Mennonite Church in 1935. In 1937 he attended the General Conference Meeting in Oregon.

John H. Gochnauer died at his home in East Petersburg, at the age of 70, on January 29, 1948. He was buried in a nearby cemetery.

—Gail L. Emerson

“All I Want for Christmas”

by J. Mark Horst

You are most likely familiar with that childish, holiday ditty, “All I want for Christmas is my two front teeth.” The writer complains that because of the missing teeth, he is unable to wish anyone a “Merry Christmas” because he can’t properly pronounce the words!

I smile at the childishness of such a wish. But I wonder, do I give my heavenly Father reason to smile at the childishness of my wishes? Have I embraced the words of the Apostle Paul, who said, “When I became a man, I put away childish things”? Is Christmas about what I can get for myself or is it giving back to God by blessing others?

In our family, we do not give each other gifts at Christmastime. We give to the needs of others in the name of Jesus. I DO NOT say or imply that giving gifts to each other is wrong. We’ve just chosen to avoid the confusion of what we’re commemorating. After all, if it is HIS birthday, He should get the gifts, right?

With those thoughts as an introduction, here’s the list of (hopefully adult) things I want for Christmas:

- An opportunity for all Christians to quietly reflect on the miracle of the Incarnation without the distraction of football games on TV, with their accompanying pornographic commercials.
- Dads who commit themselves to spending more time with their children in the new year, rather than trying to “buy them off” with the latest electronic gadget. Young people are crying out for relationship, not more stuff!

- Moms who realize that the love and togetherness of the family are more important than whether or not the turkey is done to perfection or the pumpkin pie has the right mix of spices.

- Children to value and appreciate the sacrifices their grandparents and parents have made to give them the spiritual, social, and economic opportunities they have today.

- Christians to embrace the Scriptural teaching on the value of the local church; this is the body of Christ! The realization that what I give to my brothers and sisters in the Lord is so much more important than what I get back from them.

- Pastors and leaders who see themselves as God sees them—undershepherds. Men who are strong in faith, established in the Word, humble in demeanor, gentle in discipline.

- Citizens who will thank God for the freedoms they enjoy and will make it a priority to pray for their elected leaders. Those who will take personal responsibility for ALL their actions and shun a “victim” mentality.

My list could be longer, but hopefully, you sense the desire of my heart. Quietness is a precious commodity. Families need to reevaluate priorities. People are paramount over things!

HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS! ■

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From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

What Is Apostasy?

by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

In the past, dear reader, there have been thousands who were just as confident that they had been genuinely saved and were truly trusting in the merits of the finished work of Christ to take them safely through to Heaven, as you may be. Nevertheless, they are now in the torments of Hell. Their confidence was a carnal one . . . They were too confident that their faith was a saving one to thoroughly, searchingly, frequently, test it by the Scriptures, to discover whether or not it was bringing forth those fruits that are inseparable from the faith of God's elect. If they read an article like this, they proudly concluded that it belonged to someone else. So cocksure were they that they were born again so many years ago, they refused to heed the command of 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Prove your own selves." Now it is too late. They wasted their day of opportunity, and the "blackness of darkness" is their portion forever.

In view of this solemn and awful fact, the writer earnestly calls upon himself and each reader to get down before God and sincerely cry, "Search me, O God: reveal

me to myself. If I am deceived, undeceive me ere¹ it be eternally too late. Enable me to measure myself faithfully by Thy Word, so that I may discover whether or not my heart has been renewed, whether I have abandoned every course of self-will and truly surrendered to Thee; whether I have so repented that I hate all sin and fervently long to be free from its power, loathe myself and seek diligently to deny myself; whether my faith is that which overcomes the world (1 John 5:4) or whether it be only a mere notional thing which produces no godly living; whether I am a fruitful branch of the vine or only a cumberer² of the ground; in short, whether I be a new creature in Christ or only a painted hypocrite." If I have an honest heart, then I am willing, yea anxious, to face and know the real truth about myself.

Perhaps some readers are ready to say, "I already know the truth about myself. I believe what God's Word tells me: I am a

1. **ere** – before.

2. **cumberer** – that which clutters.

sinner with no good thing dwelling in me. My only hope is in Christ." Yes, dear friend, but Christ saves His people *from* their sins. Christ sends His Holy Spirit into their hearts, so that they are radically changed from what they were previously. The Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the hearts of those He regenerates, and that love is manifested by a deep desire and sincere determination to please Him who loves me. When Christ saves a soul, He saves not only from Hell, but from the *power* of sin. He delivers him from the *dominion* of Satan and from the love of the world. He delivers him from the fear of man, the lusts of the flesh, the love of self. True, He has not yet completed this blessed work. True, the sinful nature is not yet eradicated. But one who is saved has been delivered from the *dominion* of sin (Romans 6:14). Salvation is a supernatural thing that changes the heart, renews the will, transforms the life, so that it is evident to all around that a miracle of grace has been wrought. . . . A faith that does not issue in godly living, in an obedient walk, in spiritual fruit, is not the faith of God's elect. O my reader, I beg you to diligently and faithfully examine your-

self by the light of God's unerring Word. Claim not to be a *child* of Abraham, unless you do the *works* of Abraham (John 8:39).

What Is Apostasy?

It is a making shipwreck of the faith (1 Timothy 1:19). It is the heart's departure from the living God (Hebrews 3:13). It is a returning to and being overcome by the world, after a previous escape from its pollutions through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2:20). There are various steps that precede it. First, there is a *looking back* (Luke 9:62), like Lot's wife, who though she had outwardly left Sodom, yet her heart was still there. Second, there is a *drawing back* (Hebrews 10:38): the requirements of Christ are too exacting to any longer appeal to the heart. Third, there is a *turning back* (John 6:66): the path of godliness is too narrow to suit the lustings of the flesh. Fourth, there is a *falling back*, which is fatal: "That they might go, and fall backward, and be broken" (Isaiah 28:13). ■

From *Studies in the Scriptures*,
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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

Introduction to Quarter's Lessons

The lessons for the winter quarter, December–February, all focus on Bible characters. December's lessons are from the first several chapters of Luke, and focus on individuals related to the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. January and February's lessons highlight Old Testament characters from a wide range of backgrounds and service to God.

The study of Bible characters holds our interest because often we see something of ourselves in their personalities and responses. Remember that these were real people, living in specific times, under particular circumstances. In each case, study the setting in which they lived and worked. That will enhance your understanding of the particular conditions under which they lived and served.

As you study these lessons may it give you a new appreciation for those saints of old, and may their lives provide a challenge for your faithful service to the same God we now serve in our generation.

DECEMBER 7, 2008

Mary Praises God

Luke 1:46-55

The fullness of God's time had come. The time was ripe for the sending of His Son to earth as the long-awaited Messiah. God's people had lived some 400 years in expectancy, anticipating but not knowing when the Father God would fulfill His promise given through the prophets of old. God, in His wisdom, had withheld the fulfillment of His promise until the earthly situation was satisfactory. His plans were in place, the time was now right, His handmaiden chosen for this service.

Mary was God's chosen vessel to bring the Saviour to birth. She was young, perhaps only a late teenager, but God saw in

her qualities that fit her for becoming the mother and custodian of His Son. This was a highly responsible position and God would settle for nothing but the best. Mary met His qualifications and was not only a competent mother but a loyal follower of her Son to the end.

You will want to read the entire first chapter of Luke to get the setting for today's (and next Sunday's) lesson. The announcement, the inquiry, the confirmation, submission to God's will—all were now behind Mary. The immediate setting for today's text is the home of Mary's cousin Elisabeth who was also experiencing one of God's miracles and would soon give birth to the forerunner of Mary's child.

In response to Elisabeth's blessing and confirmation of her privileged position, Mary breaks out in a paean of

praise to God. God had lifted her up, now she lifts up God, magnifying Him, rejoicing in His salvation, blessing Him for His goodness to her. She recognizes her humble status, yet also recognizes that in God's call she will be elevated and blessed by subsequent generations. This holy, mighty God had done great things for her. She rightfully gives Him praise in return.

Not only had God done great things in her life, He will be merciful to all who reverence Him. He shows Himself strong on behalf of those who fear Him. He puts down the proud and raises the humble—no doubt Mary's reference to herself. God provides for those in need, but ignores the self-sufficient. He helps those who recognize their need.

Mary then recounts God's help to His people, Israel. He had shown mercy to them on many occasions throughout their history, in keeping with His choice of them as His special people. He had made promises to Abraham, the father of the nation, "and to his seed forever." God's promises were ongoing and Mary obviously recognized that she was to play a very significant role in bringing the promise of a Saviour to fruition.

Several things stand out in Mary's song of praise. She praises God for His mercy to her personally. But she expands her praise on behalf of all those to whom He has shown mercy, and will show mercy. Her greatest note of praise, however, is that God is now fulfilling a long-standing promise to give to His people their Messiah. And she is both humbled and joyful that she has been chosen to fill a vital role in the fulfillment of that promise.

For thought and discussion

1. A study of Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah will provide helpful background for these lessons.
2. Study the marriage customs of the Jews to help you understand Mary's

(and Joseph's) dilemma at being found with child while unmarried.

3. Describe the qualities that define Mary's life.
4. Be sure you understand the importance of the virgin birth as a major tenet of the Christian faith.
5. Is the commitment and submission found in Mary's life evident in yours? That is the pathway to usefulness in God's plan, and the only way to true happiness and satisfaction.

DECEMBER 14, 2008

Elisabeth Confirms Messiah

Luke 1:39-45

Today's lesson immediately precedes last Sunday's and focuses on the reaction of Elisabeth to Mary's visit. Elisabeth and Zacharias were also significant players in God's schedule to bring Messiah to earth. Their son, who also had a miracle birth, was to be the forerunner or announcer of Jesus the Messiah.

Following the announcement to Mary by the Angel Gabriel (verses 26-38), she made the possible 70-mile trek to "the hill country . . . of Judah," likely to the city of Hebron. There she shared her wonderful news with her older cousin Elisabeth. Here were two women, chosen by God for special roles through miraculous intervention, sharing in joyful exuberance the blessing of God on their lives. This was an emotional meeting as they recognized in themselves, and each other, the impact on future generations of the momentous roles they were playing in God's plan.

As Mary embraced Elisabeth it caused both a physical and a spiritual reaction. The baby leaped in Elisabeth's womb, a leap of joy, thus giving testimony to the Messiah even before His birth (verse 44), and she was filled with the Holy Spirit (verse 41; see also Luke 1:15). This was a highly spiritual encounter for both

women, and both gave expression to their feelings by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Elisabeth blessed Mary, affirming her special role in God's plan of being the mother of the Saviour (see also verse 48). The infilling of the Holy Spirit provided her divine revelation as to the nature of Mary's child. He was none less than God's Son, the intended Saviour of mankind, and Elisabeth's own personal Saviour (verse 43). This was no casual social meeting of these women. Rather, it was a divinely orchestrated event, intended to bolster the spiritual understandings of both and to provide emotional stability and support in light of social consequences, especially for the unwed mother, Mary.

Elisabeth also blessed Mary for the expression of her faith in accepting God's pronouncement that she, though a virgin, would become the mother of the Messiah and thus the channel of divine blessing upon all mankind. Elisabeth, through Holy Spirit revelation, confirmed the message of God through the angel to Mary. Though assured and accepting of God's call and work in her life, Elisabeth's prophetic blessing was no doubt a source of deep confidence and confirmation for Mary.

In this passage we see two women of simple life and faith, embracing God's plan, accepting their roles in that plan, rejoicing in God's choice of them, and encouraging each other in their individual roles. They were women of faith and simple commitment. They serve as models of usefulness in God's work to women, and men, of every generation.

In verse 56 we note that "Mary abode with [Elisabeth] about three months," returning home just prior to John's birth. Can you imagine what these women talked about those three months? It was certainly a time of spiritual refreshment and growth for them as they absorbed into their experiences the

work of God in and through their lives.

Praise God for these faithful and committed women.

For thought and discussion

1. Reflect on the type of people God used in carrying out His plan. What outstanding characteristics do you observe in them?
2. In each of the first three lessons this month angels play a significant role. What is the ministry of angels? Do they function on behalf of believers today? In what ways?
3. God chose Mary. Elisabeth blessed Mary. What should be our response to Mary's role, and our attitude toward her?
4. It is almost inconceivable that God uses simple people like Mary and Elisabeth, and us, in fulfilling His plan. Examine your life. Is your faith and commitment such that you are available and potentially useful to God?
5. Examine the value and blessing of Christian friends, mentors, encouragers. Perhaps some class discussion.

DECEMBER 21, 2008

Shepherds Glorify God

Luke 2:8-20

Today we are once again studying the old and very familiar story of events surrounding the Christ advent. However, let's not allow the familiarity of the story to detract from the wonder and impact of the event. Once again we have humble, lowly people, this time shepherds, in focus. To stir freshness into the story, place yourself with them there in the field that night, go with them to see the baby in the manger, share with them the joy and impact of this birth, and go with them as they proclaim Messiah's birth to a waiting world. The first seven verses of the chapter provide

necessary background to today's text.

Here again we see God using people of humble mien and simple faith as participants in His great plan. There were reasons for this as we note from subsequent events both in the immediate setting and on into Christ's future life. Not all were as thrilled as the shepherds when apprised of the birth of the King of the Jews (see Matthew 2:1-15). And so it has ever been regarding this Person—some receive Him with joy, some reject and seek to destroy.

These lowly shepherds, looked down upon by higher society, were men of faith. They were anticipating Messiah's advent. No doubt in their lonely shepherding hours they talked and speculated about His coming. Now to them the messenger from Heaven appeared to inform them of His birth.

As in other appearances of the angel, his first words to the shepherds were "Fear not." One can easily imagine the fright that gripped these men as heavenly light blazed around them and an angelic messenger appeared and spoke to them. The angel's next words were words of spiritual comfort—today is born the Saviour—you will find Him in David's city. This good news was for all people and the shepherds were quick to begin proclaiming Him to others (v. 17).

Following directions given by the angel, the shepherds set out to find this babe of heavenly origin and earthly import. They found Him just as the angel had said, lying in a manger with His mother and father keeping watch. Certainly this heaven-inspired visit by the shepherds was welcome comfort and confirmation for Mary and Joseph. Yes, they knew who this child was, but to have Him confirmed by strangers as the result of a heavenly announcement would certainly have been reassuring to them and a means of strengthening their faith.

These shepherds were so overjoyed by what they had been told and what they

had seen that it was impossible to keep it to themselves. Soon the whole town knew of the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, God's gift to mankind. The shepherds' announcement was met with amazement, and perhaps some skepticism, by those who heard them. But that did not deter them. They returned to their shepherding full of joy and praising God for the things they had heard and seen.

Mary treasured all these things in her heart. She had been through much and it was all so overwhelming. She needed time to process her experience and the information given her.

And so as we process this information and the Christ-event, it becomes overwhelming to us as well. As we ponder and reflect, let's also praise and thank God for His wonderful gift of the Saviour.

For thought and discussion

1. Why was this Son of God sent into such poor and humble surroundings? Reflect on and discuss the implications of His humble earthly beginnings.
2. What does the lesson of the shepherds teach us? (There are numerous aspects.)
3. How eagerly do we anticipate Christ's second coming, and will we be surprised or frightened when it happens? Remember the angel's message.
4. The shepherds' response to the good news was to proclaim it far and wide. Are we following their example? How effective are we in disseminating the good news?
5. Mary certainly had much to ponder throughout her lifetime with her Son Jesus. Think through the experiences named and unnamed that would have caused her to reflect on this Son of hers and His mission on earth. God certainly made a wise choice in Mary.

DECEMBER 28, 2008

***John the Baptist
Proclaims God's Message***

Luke 3:7-18

We were briefly introduced to John the Baptist in the December 14 lesson, where he leaped for joy in the womb of his mother when she was greeted by Mary. Now, approximately 30 years later, we see him entering upon his ministry as the designated herald of the Messiah. John was a simple man (Matthew 3:4) and lived a secluded life (Luke 1:80) until his appointment with destiny (Luke 1:76-80). John was also an humble man, deferring any claims to greatness to the One who was to follow him as the very messenger of God Himself (see John 1:15-28).

John's role was to pave the way for Jesus' ministry, to soften hearts by preaching repentance so they would be ready to receive the message of salvation preached by Jesus (Luke 1:17). John's preaching was in the spirit and power of Elijah. Multitudes went out into the wilderness to hear this rough-hewn prophet, the first voice from Heaven in 400 years. And many responded to his call for repentance and baptism as a visible sign of the changed direction of their lives.

John's message was not a comfortable one. It was a call for a radical change of life and attitude, both toward God and toward one's fellowmen, as noted in our text for today. John did not mince words. He severely rebuked those who came with less than pure motives or who depended on their racial heritage for favor with God. He cut straight to the heart of the matter; the ax of judgment was poised to cut down unfruitful lives and cast them into the fires of destruction.

His message was convincing and convicting. The people cried out, "What shall we do?" And he had a ready answer for the various categories of seekers. Those who had plenty were to share with those in need. Tax collectors were not to exact more than required. Soldiers were not to abuse

their power and to be content with their wages. Verse 18 indicates that his message contained many other exhortations. The bottom line was that the focus of one's life was to be changed from selfishness to helpfulness and generosity. It involved a complete reorganization of life and attitudes.

The power of John's preaching got people to thinking, Was this indeed the Christ, the expected One? John was quick with an answer: "No, I am not the Christ, I am 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness'; my task is simply to prepare the way for the coming One. I baptize with water; He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire." That baptism would completely purify the life, transforming individuals from the inside out.

John understood his role and that he was the subservient one. He downplayed his stature and elevated Christ, saying, "He must increase, but I must decrease." But for all his humility he played a significant role in preparing the people for the Messiah and His message. Note how Jesus praised John in Matthew 11:7-15 for his role and greatness.

John was faithful to his calling and diligent in carrying it out. We can never rise to his stature, yet we can take lessons from his life to enhance our commitment and service to God.

For thought and discussion

1. Read the parallel accounts of John the Baptist's ministry. See also Jesus' evaluation of him in Matthew 11:7-15.
2. What made John great? Think through this carefully; there were many factors at work.
3. Was John preaching a "works religion"? How do works coordinate with repentance?
4. Did John's lifestyle influence the receptivity of his message? Does ours? Discuss.
5. There are many lessons we can learn from the life of John the Baptist: humility, boldness, simplicity, faithfulness, forthrightness. Think them through and then apply them to your life. ■

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

Israel to Post Dead Sea Scrolls Online

In a crowded laboratory in Jerusalem, scientists and scholars are working to take high resolution photographs of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) discovered in the 1940s. These scrolls date from between the third century B.C. and the first century A.D., showcasing the incredible consistency of the copying of Scriptures. The DSS are a complete copy of the Hebrew Scriptures, sans Esther. These photographs will be posted on the Internet allowing anyone to view them. This is the great importance of the Internet: open-sourcing knowledge and documents so that it can be fact-checked by anyone and everyone.

Being that I am living in a Muslim context in Jerusalem, it especially strikes me that this will help dissipate the false claim (widely accepted by Muslims) that the Tawrat (Torah) and Zabur (Psalms), while inspired Scripture, have been changed by Christians and Jews. A likely casualty of this realization is the mirror idea that the Injeel (the NT) has also, despite being inspired Scripture, been corrupted.

—Source: *New York Times*

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Iran's Ahmadinejad and the MCC

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is relatively unpopular in Iran where his ultra-conservatism is far to the right of most of the populace. A high-ranking cleric recently verbalized that unpopularity. Grand Ayatollah Bajat Sanjani is quoted by the *Financial Times (of Deutschland)* as saying, "Ahmadinejad is not complying with the will of the people. This is a major threat, a big

danger." The *Jerusalem Post* summarized the *FT* as saying, "Sanjani accused Ahmadinejad's government of breaking the law, seriously violating personal freedom and illegally empowering the Revolutionary Guard." Ahmadinejad has used confrontation with the West as a distraction from his domestic problems which include high unemployment and 26% inflation.

In related news, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is spearheading an effort to eat an Ifthar dinner (the evening meal that breaks the daytime Ramadan fast) with Ahmadinejad in New York City, around the time he addresses the U.N. This dinner was held September 25. While this meeting has sparked outrage among the politically conservative, in principle, it's very Biblical. Jesus instructed us to "do good" to and love our enemies. Jesus, like the MCC, was criticized for eating with sinners (Luke 5:30-32). However, when one starts to delve into the details of what MCC plans to do, the similarities with Jesus and His commands come to an abrupt halt. A big goal of MCC's meeting is to promote "peace and justice." The kind of "peace and justice" MCC is trying to promote is not what Jesus came to promote (Matthew 10:34). If He would have wanted to promote that, He would have come as the Jews expected Him: a conqueror driving out the occupier Romans (much as MCC styles itself doing in Israel; they see the Israelis in much the same light as first-century Jews saw the Romans). The peace Jesus came to promote was an inner peace of being right with God and having our sins forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. (More on this in a moment.) The Bible clearly shows that while we are to be peaceable and loving to everyone around us (a point conservative Christians in America often miss), we are not

to try to force peace or justice for someone else. That's God's job (Romans 12:17-21) and the government's job (Romans 13:1-7).

Jesus' mission here on earth was to bring peace, but not the kind of temporal peace MCC is apparently seeking. Jesus said in John 14:27 (NIV), "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. *I do not give to you as the world gives.*" It seems MCC is trying to promote a *political* peace "as the world gives." Romans 8:6 (NIV) gives a definition of the peace of Christ: "The mind of sinful man is death, but *the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*" If introducing Ahmadinejad to that "mind controlled by the Spirit" kind of peace is the goal of MCC meeting with him, I would be delighted. Unfortunately, that does not appear to be the case. In conclusion, let's return to the words of Jesus (which I used to show that meeting and eating with Ahmadinejad is not a problem, but rather simply following the commands of Jesus) in Luke 5:30-32 (NIV) to see what Jesus' *purpose* in eating with sinners was: "But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and "sinners"?' Jesus answered them, '**It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.**'"

For a more indepth and fully sourced analysis of this meeting between MCC and Ahmadinejad, see <http://tinyurl.com/312qgd>.

—Sources: *The Jerusalem Post*, the *Financial Times*, *Church of the Brethren News Service*

Suggested Further Reading: "Ahmadinejad's New Enemy: Women" by Amir Taheri in the *New York Post* (<http://tinyurl.com/6aa6m8>).

Baggy Pants Ban Unconstitutional

There are a number of laws banning baggy pants (that allow underwear to show) in various municipalities across the U. S. A U. S. judge has just struck down one such law in Florida as unconstitutional after a teen spent a night in jail because of it.

—Source: *AFP*

Continuing Developments in Aftermath of Russian-Georgian War

Georgian officials have released to the press recordings of intercepted phone calls between South Ossetian border officials that show that the huge Russian invading armored column entered Georgia *before* Georgia began its attack on South Ossetia. Russia had been trying to say that Georgia started the war.

Russia had ignored for weeks the French-brokered ceasefire agreement it signed, along with Georgia. Russia did stop fighting Georgia, but continued to occupy large and important swaths of Georgian territory far removed from South Ossetia or Abkhazia. Most significant among these were the large central city of Gori and the main port city of Poti. However, Russia has finally withdrawn from the most important parts of Georgia. Nonetheless, they are still in violation of the agreement, occupying narrow swaths of Georgian territory in an uncalled for "buffer zone" around South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Russia also recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, over the protests of the world. This paves the way for formal annexation, even though these areas are practically part of Russia already. Journalists have been denied entry to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia parts of Georgia unless they have a Russian visa.

Russia's actions are so far out of line that even communist China gave it the cold shoulder. Russia asked the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (a group of four Central Asian ex-Soviet nations, Russia, and China) for a statement of support. Instead, they issued a statement condemning Russia's use of force and calling for respect for every country's territorial integrity.

Russia also raised a squall about the U. S. delivering humanitarian aid to a Georgia wrecked by their military machine. Russia was unhappy that the U.S. was using Navy and Coast Guard ships to make the deliveries. It claimed that this was not the norm and was a provocation. Russia needs to study history a bit better. The U.S.

nearly always provides a worldwide fast-response of humanitarian aid after disasters (tsunami, earthquakes, flooding, etc.) and in the vast majority of cases it is delivered by U.S. warships. Even in domestic disasters, its National Guard and Coast Guard deliver aid and render assistance.

—Sources: *Times of London*, *AP*, *AFP*, *The Washington Post*

Suggested Further Reading: “What is to be done?” (<http://tinyurl.com/3fz535>) and “History’s Back” (<http://tinyurl.com/5m73kt>) in *The Weekly Standard*.

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Chicago Death Toll Double Iraq’s

One hundred twenty-five people were murdered in Chicago this summer, double the amount of U.S. troops killed in Iraq.

—Source: *CBS2-Chicago*

Suggested Further Reading: “Back in Iraq, Jarred by the Calm” in *The New York Times* (<http://tinyurl.com/4vj2xp>).

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Financial Crisis

The root of the current financial crisis is too much borrowing by people who cannot afford it. The classic scenario is someone paying \$300K for a house with a mortgage with little down payment; when the value of that house crashed to \$250K, the person is left with a \$300K debt, but with only \$250K of collateral, prompting default.

A big culprit is big government. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are two government-sponsored entities created by proponents of the nanny state to provide home loans to those that couldn’t afford it. In 2003, the Bush Administration saw the problems with FM & FM and pushed legislation to increase oversight; it was rejected by Congress.

In 2005, seeing the problems with FM & FM, John McCain and several other co-sponsors introduced a bill to fix some of the systemic problems (one of the most fundamental being that FM & FM were half-government, half-private company; basically shareholders received the profits and the government had the risks. Beyond being unfair, this made it so that FM &

FM engaged in behavior which was riskier than normal, because it was backstopped by the government and because riskier behavior brought higher profits) with the way FM & FM handled themselves and were structured. In a speech supporting the legislation, McCain said, “If Congress does not act, American taxpayers will continue to be exposed to the enormous risk that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac pose to the housing market, the overall financial system, and the economy as a whole.”

McCain also warned about the vast amounts of money that FM & FM were giving to Congressmen to ensure that they could continue this absurd situation of shareholder profit and government risk. Topping the list of recipients of FM & FM money were Democratic Senators Dodd, Obama, and Kerry. The Democrats killed the reform bill with a party line vote.

—Sources: *Bloomberg*, *OpenSecrets.org*, *Hot Air.com* *GovTrack.us*

Recommended Further Reading: “Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Invest in Lawmakers” on *OpenSecrets.org* (<http://tinyurl.com/6ohlbz>), “How the Democrats Created the Financial Crisis: Kevin Hasset” on *Bloomberg* (<http://tinyurl.com/3ho6eh>), “Whose policies led to the credit crisis?” by Ed Morrissey on *HotAir.com* (<http://tinyurl.com/5qxqdb>), “McCain’s attempt to fix Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac in 2005” by Ed Morrissey on *HotAir.com* (<http://tinyurl.com/4adgdp>), “How to cure this sick system” in *Forbes* (<http://tinyurl.com/48rh6j>).

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Saudi Cleric Says “Depraved” TV Moguls May Be Killed

AFP writes: “A senior Saudi cleric has issued a religious decree saying the owners of television networks broadcasting ‘depravation and debauchery’ may be killed, Al-Arabiya television reported on Friday.

“The owners of these channels propagate depravation and debauchery,” said Saleh al-Luhaidan, chief justice of the supreme judicial council, the highest judicial authority in the ultra-conservative Saudi kingdom.

“He made the remarks on radio in response to a caller who asked him to give an opinion on what he said were ‘immoral’

programmes on Arab television during the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, a source at Al-Arabiya said.

“It is lawful to kill . . . the apostles of depravation . . . if their evil cannot be easily removed through simple sanctions,’ Luhaidan said, according to an excerpt of the remarks broadcast on the Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya.

“The situation is ‘serious . . . the degradation of morals is a form of perversion on earth,’ he added.

“Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh, head of Saudi Arabia’s highest religious authority, earlier this year issued a fatwa against ‘Noor’ and decreed that any channel broadcasting the series is ‘an enemy of God and his Prophet.’ ”

Living in Jerusalem and hanging out with Palestinians gives this whole thing an ironic twist: Noor is by far the most popular TV show among Palestinians. My Palestinian friends are always talking about it. Its stars adorn T-shirts. Several young boys came up to me in a Palestinian refugee camp and pointed at me shouting, “Muhannad! Muhannad!” They were noting that they thought I looked like one of the Noor characters.

—Excerpt from “Saudi cleric says ‘depraved’ TV moguls may be killed” in *AFP* (<http://tinyurl.com/3f87sk>).

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Mom Microwaves Baby

In Dayton, Ohio, a mother who murdered her baby daughter by cooking her to death in a microwave was sentenced to life in prison without parole. —Source: *AP*

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More Violence Against Christians in India

MNN: “At least 3,000 people, most of them Christians, are living in government-run relief camps after days of Christian-versus-Hindu violence in the Kandhamal district of Orissa State in eastern India. . . . At least 20 Christians have been killed. Christian community leaders say at least 1,000 Christian homes have been set on fire since Monday, and more than 5,000 people are homeless.

“John Varghese, speaking from Orissa, oversees the Philadelphia Fellowship Church, a native-run missionary movement in India. He says the upper-caste BJP, World Hindu Council, has a plan in place to keep power over the lower-castes’ majority tribal peoples. ‘This upper-caste community always wants to divide them so that they keep the political power over them. Christianity is the only power which can unite these people, and this is a big threat for the people politically.’ ”

NYT: “The latest conflict started Saturday night, when unidentified armed men stormed a Hindu school in Kandhamal and killed the Hindu leader Laxmanananda Saraswati and four of his followers. The police suspected that Maoist rebels were responsible. But Hindus blamed Christians.”

—Excerpts from “Politics behind religious violence, says Christian” in *Mission Network News* (<http://tinyurl.com/404tjy>); “Faiths Clash, Displacing Thousands in East India” in *The New York Times* (<http://tinyurl.com/3f8j4w>).

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Recommended Further Reading

“Software spots the spin in political speeches” (<http://tinyurl.com/4o6cap>) in *New Scientist* talks about a scientific algorithm that analyzes the amount of “spin” (when a person “presents themselves or their content in a way that does not necessarily reflect what they know to be true”) in political speeches; Obama scored the most spin with a 6.7, McCain scored -7.58, Biden scored approximately -2, and Palin approximately 1 (zero being average, above zero being higher spin, lower values being less spin.)

“The Wars of John McCain” (<http://tinyurl.com/4stbh8>) in *The Atlantic* gives an insightful look into how John McCain’s service in Vietnam informed his (now vindicated) firm policy stance on Iraq.

“Conflict Over Spying Led White House to Brink” (<http://tinyurl.com/4jcszw>) and “Cheney Shielded Bush From Crisis” (<http://tinyurl.com/54hyxm>) in *The Washington Post* gives a detailed inside look into the near meltdown in the Bush White House over the legality of the domestic wiretapping controversy.

Feedback: hansmast@hansmast.com

Resurrection Perspective

What the Apostle Paul and William Carey teach us about endurance

by Larry E. Clements

He must have thought of quitting a thousand times. Early-nineteenth-century missionary William Carey faced continual difficulties and heartbreak as he sought to establish an outpost for Christ in India. He buried two of his four young children before his second anniversary there. His distraught wife, Dorothy, lived the remainder of her days behind a locked door. Many supporting churches discontinued their offerings, forcing William to work in an indigo factory to sustain his family. He learned Bengali and Sanskrit in order to translate the Scriptures and to share the gospel, but seven years elapsed before he led his first convert to Christ. Also his early translations went up in smoke as a fire destroyed his print shop.

Yet he pressed on.

**Paul's advice:
Don't lose heart.**

William Carey's life revealed an inherent characteristic of all great Christians: they never give up. Most twenty-first-century American Christians have it easy compared to William Carey and scores of other servants of God. Yet we're still prone to lose heart at the first sign of hardship. How can we increase our spiritual endurance? How can we keep serving during difficult times? In 2 Corinthians 4:8 the Apostle Paul

shared three things with the Corinthian church that kept him from losing heart.

Inward renewal. Paul remained strong while enduring tremendous trials. He wrote, "We are troubled on every side," "perplexed," "persecuted," and "cast down." Yet after each assault he affirmed he was "not distressed," "not in despair," "not forsaken," and "not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8, 9). How could he withstand such pressure? His spiritual life was consistently being renewed. A few verses later he wrote, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (v. 16).

Just as a good daily diet and exercise strengthen our physical bodies, daily Bible reading and prayer strengthen our spiritual lives. Jesus implied this when He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Every Christian needs daily time in the Word and prayer to keep the inward person strong. Remember the Bereans? They developed noble character by examining "the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Eternal perspective. Paul wrote, "For our light affliction, which is but for

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17). How could Paul, who had endured stoning and shipwreck for the cause of Christ, refer to his afflictions as “light”? Because he compared his suffering to the glory it would produce. Paul viewed his earthly affliction from a heavenly perspective. He did not endure pain in vain. He knew reward would follow every sacrifice for Christ.

We tend to exaggerate affliction rather than evaluate it. But hardship comes with the territory. Peter wrote, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

How can we put our afflictions into perspective? Instead of dwelling on the “troubles,” we consider the “glory” that will follow. We recognize that our troubles are “light” while the glory which we will receive “far outweighs them all.”

In addition we compare the “momentary” nature of earthly troubles with the “eternal” glory generated. We can endure any pain for the cause of Christ because we know it brings reward, is of limited duration, and produces everlasting results.

Eternal perception. Paul summarized, “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). The word we translate as “look” means “to mark, to take aim at.” Our word *scope* finds its source in this word. A rifle’s scope enables the shooter to see

and hit the target more easily. The scope does not remove distractions; it simply allows the shooter’s eye to zero in on the target. Paul did not urge us to ignore the temporary, but to focus on the real aim—the eternal.

Opportunities to exercise such a perspective regularly surround us. Every person we meet will spend eternity with or apart from God. Paul saw people as eternal beings, not as temporary creatures. He focused so much on the eternal that he never seriously considered quitting. Neither should we. He lived here on earth with his goals and activities aimed heavenward. So should we.

William Carey, through gut-wrenching struggles, heeded the exhortation of the Apostle John, who wrote, “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28).

But what if Carey had not persevered in the face of seemingly insurmountable pressure? India would have lost its greatest force for the gospel. Fourteen hundred would have gone unbaptized over the next twenty-one years. Bible translations into thirty-five Indian languages and dialects would never have been produced. More than one hundred schools for seven thousand Indian nationals, including the highly regarded Serampore College, would never have opened their doors.

Yet each of these things did happen because Carey, like the Apostle Paul, was willing to persevere in the face of hardship. Carey’s eternal perspective blessed the people of India. May we each be a blessing as we exercise spiritual endurance in the face of hardship. ■

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

Paul did not urge us to ignore the temporary, but to focus on the real aim—the eternal.

Christmas Giving

by Mark D. Avery

All of us would agree: Life is extremely busy. Yet somehow the pace seems to increase steadily as Christmas nears. In addition to the usual activities, our calendars also reflect Christmas programs at school and church, special activities like caroling, Sunday school class events, and holiday parties at the office. Many families include special reunions during the Christmas season as well.

New toys and gadgets often make the news at Christmastime. This year, as in years past, a shortage of supply has brought out the worst in some people. How can people get so caught up in the details of Christmas that they miss the spirit of Christmas? Not so many years ago my wife and I overheard a family discussion in a local department store. One statement from that brief encounter has stayed in my mind: "They'll get something for us, so we'd better get something for them."

The Christian perspective ought to be far different from that. Christmas is not about giving so we will get. Instead, Christmas ought to be about giving so we have an opportunity to minister, to give more.

This year, our family prayed that we would have an opportunity to witness to a certain neighbor. We had attempted to engage him in conversation, but he seldom even responded to a greeting. Then one day, he took the initiative. Now we are building a relationship and getting involved in his life.

This neighbor has nothing to offer us.

He is disabled and dependent on friends for help. Helping him requires giving without expectation of anything in return. As we have gotten acquainted with him, we have begun wondering what we can do to show him Jesus. We have not found all the answers we need, but we are still looking.

Jesus was motivated by helping people. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" is His challenge to us. Letting our light shine involves doing good works. Yet the purpose of our good works should be to bring glory to our Heavenly Father.

An attitude that seeks to glorify the Father is unique in our society. Much of what is done, as good and noble as it may be, is done to honor self. Yet a willingness to get involved in the lives of others is certainly an evidence of a desire to bring glory to God.

Then again, that is what Jesus did. He left Heaven to give us what we could never have without Him. He gave to us, knowing that we could never give anything of consequence to Him. That is the spirit of Christmas. Jesus gave despite the cost. Those who receive His gift do not deserve what He gave. Yet He gave to help us and to honor His Heavenly Father. We, motivated by His love working in our hearts, give to help others, thus honoring "your Father which is in heaven." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Church Herald & Holiness Banner*, December 2006.



Counseling From the Word

Paradigm for Awakening

by Mike Sharrett

There are four precursors for divine transformation. These include (1) a holy disturbance, (2) a knowledge of God, (3) a divine thirst, and (4) conviction of sin. In the first of these precursors, there is the necessity of a “**holy disturbance**” or a “**divine setup**” in which the grace of God is working to draw people to Himself. This point is extremely important as it regards the work of counseling in that it serves as a comforting reminder of God’s pursuing passion for people. People do not find God, rather God finds people, and He does so every intentionally. When people who are encountering the difficulties of life enter the counseling setting, one of the first things counselors should consider is whether or not a “holy disturbance” is taking place. Is the counselee actively following Jesus Christ? Does he or she even profess faith in Jesus Christ? Are his or her current circumstances possibly serving the task of getting him or her alone before God so that He may deal with him/her in a very personal and relational way?

Secondly, an accurate assessment of a counselee entails a cursory understanding as to the counselee’s **knowledge of God**. This is not a “God as one understands Him” kind of knowledge, but an understanding, as the sermon illustrates, in which God is known on His own terms (as outlined in the Bible): an understanding that includes an insight into God’s holiness and righteousness. Counselors must develop a keen awareness that culture (religion included) and human nature

motivate a tendency in which counsees create God in their own image. Such a tendency is particularly dangerous because if left untended people can assume they have a knowledge of God without such genuine knowledge actually existing. For example, some may believe they are able to gain God’s acceptance through good deeds. Others may believe God is exclusively a loving God, and that repentance is unnecessary. Still others may feel so guilty for past sins that the possibility of being authentically loved by God is impossible. Any of these scenarios can create a problem in counseling, especially if the counselor assumes his or her counselee has an accurate, biblical understanding of God as He is revealed in the Scriptures!

Thirdly, does the counselee exhibit a **thirst** for God? One way to determine this is to gain an understanding of that in which the counselee practices his or her faith. Does he or she crave happiness above all else? Does he or she believe that hope and stability will finally be realized when a healthy self-esteem is developed? Does he live for wealth? Does she live for the affections of a man? Is he convinced his sex life would become complete if his wife would simply watch porn with him? All of these illustrate a functional faith in things other than God. If counsees reflect such attitudes and beliefs, in essence they are seeking to quench their thirst by means of futility. To illustrate an example of this travesty, the pastor cites Jeremiah where it is written, “Has a nation changed its

gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the Lord, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:11-13, *ESV*). From this, the question may be posed: “For what does the counselee thirst?” If the counselor recognizes it is anything other than God, he or she must work to “draw out” the counselee’s thirst. To do so, counselors must develop skillful questions that will reveal to clients their own practice of looking to cisterns for that which may only be satisfied in the Fountain of Living Waters, Jesus Christ.

Finally, does the counselor see a genuine **conviction of sin** reflected in the attitude of the counselee? This reveals the counselee’s final reference point. It serves as a very strong piece of data that will inform steps one, two, and three of the counseling process. If conviction is not present, counselors must understand that the counselee’s ultimate reference point is self, not God. This understanding should facilitate a wise and thoughtful approach to offering biblical truth to someone who, by nature, despises such truth. Patience, prayer, grace, kindness, and love are essential in such situations.

Biblical counselors are well served by recognizing the significance of the pastor in offering godly wisdom for the work of counseling. Good biblical teaching lends the necessary insights into God’s Word that serve to equip counselors to rightly divide the Word of truth. Christian psychology and counseling have often erred in embracing research to the exclusion of pastoral insight.

Counseling Considerations

1. Biblical counselors must ask themselves, “Is my counselee currently engaged in a ‘holy disturbance’ in which God is work-

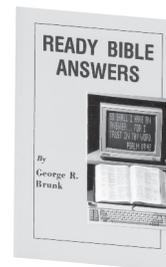
ing to draw him or her into fellowship with Himself?”

2. Biblical counselors act responsibly by assessing whether or not counselees have a biblically accurate knowledge of God. Do they understand God on His own terms as comprehensively (not exhaustively) outlined in the Bible?
3. Biblical counselors seek to understand that for which a counselee thirsts. Is it love, self-esteem, recognition, control, power, money, etc.?
4. Biblical counselors seek to develop skillful questions that will “draw out” a counselee’s thirst, then point him or her to the Fountain of Living Water. This is not accomplished via religious platitudes, but by thoughtful discussion and dialogue. See Jeremiah 2:11-13.
5. Biblical counselors are aware of a counselee’s level of conviction over sin. This element is essential in knowing the spiritual condition of the counselee, which then informs the initial process of counseling. ■

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by *Geo. R. Brunk I*



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The Emergent Church Teachings versus the Bible's Teaching

A comparison chart

This chart has been adapted from the similar charts used to compare the Church Growth Movement (CGM) and the Purpose Driven Church (PDC) to the teachings of Scripture. While there may be similarities between the three movements, there are striking differences as well.

DISCLAIMER: Not every “emergent church” holds to all positions listed, but rather this is a general overview of what many of them do hold to, and a tool for your discernment. Many pro-emergents have taken issue with this chart and vehemently deny this is what their churches hold to or teach. In the spirit of fairness and honesty, if this describes you, contact me *here* and share with me your church website so that I might include it in the list of emergent churches that do NOT teach or hold to any of the points listed below. I will begin posting these websites as soon as I hear from those who take issue with this chart.

EMERGENT CHURCH	BIBLE
<p>Man adds to the church daily as should be saved through relational methods . . .</p> <p>Churches are taking into consideration what the unsaved and/or unchurched dislike about the church, then applying the results and statistics to determine how the church should be run.</p>	<p>“And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47).</p> <p>“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1 John 1:7).</p> <p>“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep” (Psalm 127:1, 2).</p>
<p>The church needs a new purpose (outward focus) and must change (adapt to modern culture).</p>	<p>The Church already has a purpose since its beginning 2000 years ago. The Great Commission: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).</p> <p>“Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).</p> <p>“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).</p>
<p>Conform the church to the image of the world and modern cultural trends in order to make the church a comfortable place for the unsaved.</p>	<p>“Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?” (James 4:4).</p> <p>“And be not conformed to this world . . .” (Romans 12:2).</p> <p>“The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:17, 18).</p>

EMERGENT CHURCH	BIBLE
Do not offend seekers with "religious" words.	"And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word" (1 Peter 2:8).
Focus on man-made, multi-step programs toward psychological healing and deliverance.	One-step deliverance program: Being Born Again in Christ. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). At the most, we could also acknowledge a second "step": Sanctification, which is the process of perfecting the saints until we are resurrected in our glorified bodies.
Scriptures are insufficient for perfecting the saints. Psychology and sociology help the church where the Bible seems to lack.	"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).
Entertain the world into the Kingdom of God. Focus on the things that make church more "real" to the sinner.	Convict the world unto salvation: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Corinthians 12:3).
Caters to the flesh. Engage all the senses in worship through scents (candles, incense), sounds (modern worship music, culturally relevant music), sight (interpretive dance, visually stimulating artwork, icons).	Crucifies the flesh: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:13).
Pleasers of men.	Pleasers of God: "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men , but God, which trieth our hearts" (1 Thessalonians 2:4).
The answer to low self-esteem is high self-esteem.	Concept of self-esteem is nonexistent in Scripture. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).
Christians need to be a pleasing savor to the world.	"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16).
Be loved by the world.	"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you , and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake" (Luke 6:22). "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (1 John 3:13).

EMERGENT CHURCH	BIBLE
Reach out and relate to the lost and generate friendships and conversations—and the Kingdom shall be added unto you.	“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).
Unchurched or dechurched have rejected church but not necessarily God.	All unsaved are in rebellion and have rejected God: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).
The unchurched will come to church via a good experience. Man-centered focus, appeals to the carnal rather than the spiritual.	They will come to church only by God’s sovereign work of grace: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).
Man-centered.	Christ-centered.
This generation is different from all past generations.	This generation’s spiritual condition is IDENTICAL to all generations before it. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
Seeks personal fulfillment.	Seeks obedience to Christ.
Integrates secular psychology and philosophy with the teachings of the Bible.	<p>“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Timothy 6:20).</p> <p>“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).</p> <p>“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).</p> <p>“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies” (2 Peter 2:1).</p>
Unconditional acceptance.	Requires repentance; God is not tolerant of evil. Sets in place Elders in church discipline to judge and restore those in the church.
You set boundaries.	God sets the boundaries.
Supports ecumenical endeavors.	<p>“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17).</p> <p>“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).</p>

EMERGENT CHURCH	BIBLE
Ecumenical endeavors . . . cont'd.	"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14).
Principle of Pragmatism: If it works, it must be good!	Be faithful to the same message whether they respond or not: "And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear " (Ezekiel 3:11).
All truth is God's truth.	"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth " (John 14:17; 16:13).
Respecter of persons.	"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).
Makes the Highway to Heaven as wide as possible.	"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way , which leadeth unto life, and <i>few there be that find it</i> " (Matthew 7:14).
Thinks men seek after God.	"There is none that seeketh after God" (Romans 3:11). God seeks after men: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).
Preach only "positive" messages from the pulpit.	Preach publicly the full counsel of God which includes both the love of God and the wrath of God.
Based on principles of this world and "universal truths."	Church governed by the Word of God, based on nothing but the person of Christ and Him crucified. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Below are some of the more common words and phrases used among pro-emergent speakers, authors, websites, and blogs. I'd give definitions for each, but part of the problem with the emergent language is that these words and phrases don't really have one meaning—they're subjective, depending on who is using them, and how they're using them.

The common "language" of emergents:

authentic faith | relational | collaborative | communication | community | creativity
 dialogue | diversity | engage | fluid | friendship | gathering | generational | generative
 global | healthy spirituality | inclusive | interpersonal | missional | mutual enrichment
 mystery | mystical | neoorthodox | philosophy | paradigm shift | reinvented
 renewing | revolution | spiritual | spiritual leaders | theological landscape
 thought leaders | transition | transitional | transforming

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Satisfied

by William Lister Krewson

Jesus, master storyteller, painted two portraits of humanity's relation to God. He described two prayers offered in God's temple. The first was from a Pharisee whose prayer consisted of a rehearsal of his religious deeds: "I thank you that I am not like all other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector" (Luke 18:11, NIV). The Pharisee's faith rested on his own worthiness, contrasted with the nearby tax collector, whose reputation sank to that of society's criminals. The tax collector worked for the occupying Roman Empire's revenue department. Most considered him to be the scum of the earth, representing everything that would cause his fellow Jews to despise him. Apparently, he had come to share the same opinion of himself as others did, since he came to the temple and prayed, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13, NIV).

The tax collector's prayer is simple but profound. The verb that he used to implore God for mercy (*hilaskomai*) is related to the word for an important article in the temple. Within the Holy of Holies stood the Ark of the Covenant, a large wooden chest covered in gold. The Ark served as God's throne (2 Samuel 6:2). Inside the Ark were kept the two tablets of the Law (Deuteronomy 10:5). The imagery is plain—the God who sits on His throne rules according to His holy law. There was yet another vital part of the Ark—the cover. It was a solid gold lid called the "atonement cover" or "mercy seat" (Exodus 25:17; Hebrews 9:5), called the "*hilasterion*" in the Greek Old

Testament (the Septuagint) and the New Testament. This was the place where blood was applied on the Day of Atonement causing God to show His mercy in forgiving the people (Leviticus 16:14, 15). The wrath of a holy God whose holy law must not be broken could be satisfied only one way—through blood. The cover became the place of mercy, graphically located between God and His law. In that place, God's wrath found satisfaction. The tax collector pleaded for mercy (*hilaskomai*) which could only come from the mercy seat (*hilasterion*).

"All who desperately come to God for mercy find it lavishly poured out through Christ Jesus."

When Jesus shed His blood as the supreme sacrifice, His death propitiated (satisfied) God's wrath and allowed His mercy to flow. Jesus is the one "whom God put forward as a propitiation (*hilasterion*) by his blood, to be received by faith" (Romans 3:25, ESV). "Propitiation" refers to the satisfaction of God's anger. In Old Testament days, God was propitiated at the mercy seat of the temple. Since the death of Jesus, our Saviour is God's new mercy seat. He is "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation (*hilaskomai*) for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17, NAS). All who desperately come to God for mercy find it lavishly poured out through Christ Jesus who is "the propitiation (*hilasmos*) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2, NAS). Our hearts find satisfaction in Jesus Christ, God's new mercy seat. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *PBU Today*, Summer 2007.



Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

This column welcomes the submission of original hymns. Please send hymns, as well as applicable information about the author and/or composer to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.

Joy to the World



by Watts/Mason

Lyrics: The text for this well-known Christmas carol was first published in Isaac Watts' hymnbook, *The Psalms of David*. The ideas of the poem are derived from Psalm 98, and simply placed into a New Testament context. With this background, there is considerable debate about whether or not Watts considered "Joy to the World" to be a Christmas song referring to the first coming of Christ. Watts' own subtitle is "The Messiah's Coming and Kingdom," but parts of it would be a stretch to apply to the present stage of the Kingdom of God.

The first stanza is mainly where the Christmas association of this text comes from. "The Lord is come" is taken to refer to the birth of Jesus, and "Let every heart prepare Him room" is seen as a contrast to the people of Bethlehem who did not want to give Joseph and Mary a place to stay. In this context, the singing of "heaven and nature" is taken to refer to the angel chorus that announced Jesus' birth. The middle of the second verse is often mistakenly sung "While fields and flocks" to further enhance the "carol" value of the hymn. The terms *fields*, *flocks*, *rocks*, *hills*, and *plains* in this context conjure up images of the shepherds on the fields of Bethlehem much better than if *flocks* were substituted with the correct word *floods*.

The third verse is the one that is the most difficult to reconcile with the Christmas theme. Jesus did set up a kingdom during His time on earth, but not necessarily the kind that "rules the world" in the sense that the text implies. Some people have taken this and concluded that the whole song is speaking of the Second Coming. A few have gone so far as to change the opening line to "... the Lord will come!"¹ However, it is not necessarily contradictory to sing one verse about the Advent and another verse about the Second Coming. The Christmas message of this hymn should not be downplayed or denied just because not all of the song can be applied directly to the coming of the baby in the manger.

Music: Although many printings of this Christmas carol still attribute the original tune to George Frederic Handel, most scholars agree that Handel had little to do with this music.² The only connections to Handel are two musical ideas that seem to be taken from parts of his famous oratorio, "The Messiah." The musical motive that accompanies the opening phrase "Joy to the World" is the same one that opens the chorus "Lift Up Your Heads." The other idea taken from Handel's oratorio is the melody for the

Joy to the World

Rejoice greatly! O daughter of Zion. – ZECHARIAH 9:9

ANTIOCH C. M.

ARR. FROM G. F. HANDEL
BY LOWELL MASON, 1830

ISAAC WATTS, 1719

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come! Let earth re-ceive her King; Let
2. Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns! Let men their songs em-ploy; While
3. He rules the world with truth and grace; And makes the na-tions prove The

ev-'ry heart pre-pare Him room, And heav'n and na-ture sing, And
fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains, Re-peat the sounding joy, Re-
glo-ries of His right-eous-ness, And won-ders of His love, And
And heav'n and na-ture

heav'n and na-ture sing, And heav'n, and heav'n and na-ture sing.
peat the sound-ing joy; Re-peat, re-peat the sound-ing joy.
won-ders of His love, And won-ders, won-ders of His love.
sing, And heav'n and na-ture sing, And heav'n and na-ture sing.

first two repetitions of “and heav’n and nature sing.” This comes from the orchestral introduction to the first recitative in the work, “Comfort Ye.” When William Holford published his version of this tune in the mid-1830s, he actually called it “Comfort,” perhaps in reference to the original usage of this borrowed phrase. Although previous versions of this tune had been printed,

Holford was the one who originally attributed the tune to Handel.³ When Lowell Mason arranged it and coupled it with Watts’ text in 1839, he kept Handel’s name at the top, but changed the name of the tune to “Antioch.” ■

1. www.rainbowskies.com/hymns/psalter
2. www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com
3. <http://gfhandel.org>

Christmas

by Alvin Yutzky

It is interesting how some of the plain people go to great effort to teach how to keep Christmas holy; it is very much like the signs on the bulletins of the very worldly churches all across America today: "Let's put Christ back into Christmas."

The Christian's attitude and heart cry should be: "Get Christ into your heart and exalt Him on the highest pedestal within your life. Keep Him there 365 days a year." Every aspect of Jesus is important to the believer: His birth, His childhood, His ministry, His life, His death, and His resurrection.

Do we read in the holy Word that New Testament Christians kept a day in observance of His birth? No. But the first day of the week was probably, at least in part, kept because of His resurrection. Why do you think the first Christians didn't write about keeping a day in observance of the birth of Christ if it's so important? Wouldn't they have had a better idea when Christ's birth date was than we do 2,000 years later? Why didn't they write about observing it? Weren't they as spiritual as we are? Well, actually, they did write about observing days. What the days were being observed for, I don't know.

"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Galatians 4:9). What were these weak and beggarly things? The answer is found in verse 10: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." And verse 11: "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." We could say Paul used quite strong language in regards to the above matter.

Colossians 2:16 speaks about meat and drink. These holy days, months, and Sab-

bath days were to be observed under the law, as a shadow of things to come.

Why revert back to shadows and keeping days? We have the real thing: Christ the Hope within us, every day. Praise the Lord!

Romans 14:1-6 addresses eating all foods or only certain foods, probably in regards to what they had been taught in the Law about some foods being acceptable or not. Verse 5 speaks about keeping days, observing days, or regarding every day alike. I believe every open-minded person would agree that the Scripture teaches us not to judge or condemn the one who eats only certain foods or keeps or observes certain days.

But get this. It also labels those as weak in faith (verse 1). Do we want to be of those who are weak in the faith? The general consensus of those who keep Christmas is to observe it in a spiritual way and keep free from the world's festivities and fanfare. While that desire to be free of the world's trappings is good, how does it actually go in all reality? I personally know of a person who advocates the "free from the world" approach. In the very recent past he had a green and red (Christmas colors) toy train that he played with on Christmas Day to entertain his grandchildren, while their big eyes watched. The train goes around and merrily (or carnally) the music goes, "Santa Claus is coming to town."

One of our ministers said, "I have yet to see a person who keeps Christmas that doesn't get involved in the world festivities to some degree."

The Anabaptists wrote many beautiful songs about Christ's birth and the other aspects of His life, death, resurrection, etc. But the writing of songs does not conclude that they kept a day in observance of His birth.

I have not always felt like this. I used to be one of those who tried to keep Christmas in a godly way. I remember how in the days before December 25, the excitement would start to build up in my heart. Emotions would tingle in anticipation of the holiday. Songs of the birth of Jesus were on my mind nearly all the time. And then Christmas Day arrived, the culmination of emotions and anticipation. Family reunions, singing the songs of the birth of Jesus, rejoicing in the Lord. That doesn't sound like anything bad, does it?

In the days and weeks after Christmas: "Don't sing songs about the birth of Jesus now. Wait till next Christmas season." Don't you have a little bit of the "morning after" feeling? Like you have reached an emotional low after an emotional high?

God is looking for people that will

praise, worship, and exalt Him on the highest pedestal of their heart 365 days of the year. Bearing the cross, sacrificing our will, and following Christ completely is not always an easy thing to do. But anyone can keep Christmas. William Shirer, in his book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, says that Hitler and Stalin sent each other Christmas greeting cards every year at Christmastime.

In hopes of not sounding judgmental, I say with Brother Paul, I fear for those that turn "to the weak and beggarly elements," keeping days (Galatians 4:9). According to the Word of God, I feel closer to God's will trying to exalt Christ every day than in keeping or observing one day above another, and God would be disappointed if I observed Christmas. ■

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 USC 3685)

1. Publication Title: *The Sword and Trumpet*
2. Publication Number: 6155-4000
3. Filing Date: October 1, 2008
4. Issue Frequency: monthly
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 12
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$15.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 6083 Mt. Clinton Pike, Harrisonburg, VA 22802. Contact Person: Paul Emerson. Telephone: 540-867-9419
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: Same.
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: *The Sword and Trumpet, Inc.*, P. O. Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803. Managing Editor: Paul Emerson, 6083 Mt. Clinton Pike, Harrisonburg, VA 22802
10. Owner: *The Sword and Trumpet, Inc.*, P. O. Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.
11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding one percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None.
12. Tax Status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months.
13. Publication Title: *The Sword and Trumpet*
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: October, 2008
15. a. Total number of copies printed (net press run): average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 3,321; actual single issue nearest filing date, 3,368. b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales, None; 2. Mailed subscriptions: average number copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 3,196; actual single issue nearest to filing date, 3,200. c. Total paid and/or requested circulation: same as preceding. d. Free distribution by mail (samples, complimentary, and other free): average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 100; single issue nearest to filing date, 75. e. Free distribution outside the mail (carriers or other means): None. f. Total free distribution: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 100; single issue nearest to filing date, 75. g. Total distribution: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 3,261; actual single issue nearest to filing date, 3,268. h. Copies not distributed: 1. Office use, leftovers, spoiled: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 60; actual single issue nearest to filing date, 100. 2. Returns from news agents: None. i. Total: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 3,321; actual single issue nearest to filing date, 3,368. Percent paid and/or requested circulation: average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months, 95%; actual single issue nearest to filing date, 98%.

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. Paul M. Emerson, Editor, Oct. 3, 2008



Sermon of the Month



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

Jesus Christ Having the Preeminence

by Henry Martin

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (Colossians 1:18, 19).

The preeminence of Christ means Jesus Christ having first place. Only this brings true peace in a person’s life. This will affect all the decisions we face in life. The Apostle Paul, before conversion, did not have true peace, because he was rejecting what he had heard about Jesus. On the road to Damascus with the intent of putting Christ’s followers into prison, he met Jesus and heard His voice, *“Why persecutest thou me?”* (Acts 9:3-15). He then said, *“Lord, what do you want me to do?”* Paul followed the instructions, and went to Ananias. He believed and was baptized. After this he boldly preached that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah. Paul’s life after this was a testimony that Jesus had first place in his life; he became one of the apostles who preached to Jews and Gentiles. We thank God that as Gentiles we can have Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit living within us.

If Jesus has first place in a person’s life, he will want to follow and practice His commandments. Jesus said, *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”* (John 15:14).

What are some of His commandments?

1. *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:19, 20). Jesus and the Holy Spirit gave Paul a burden at Athens (Acts 17:16), when the whole city was given to idolatry. All those who have been in India in the last 25 years still see idol worship. 85% of a billion people worship idols—what a mission field! Sad to say, even much professed Christianity today is not teaching the all things of the Bible.

2. Love your enemies, do good to those who mistreat you (Romans 12:18-21). Overcome evil with good. Jesus said, *“Do good to them that hate you”* (Matthew 5:44). This tells us we could not go to war, but rather we should be ready to help someone in need.

3. Jesus said in John 17 that the believers are in the world but not of the world. It is a challenge for every Christian to live a life that portrays this.

4. A love for our brethren and sisters in the church. Jesus said in John 13:34, 35, *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”* The New Testament speaks over 100 times regarding the subject of love for our brethren and sisters in the church and for all people.

5. Washing of the saints' feet is another ordinance that Jesus wants us to practice. In John 13:1-17, Jesus said, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Verse 17 says, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

6. A remembrance of how Jesus suffered, gave His body a sacrifice, and shed His precious blood, for the remission of sins. A communion service is a special service for the born-again believers. Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me." A believer should not want to miss this service. There is something seriously wrong in a person's life if he can miss communion for three or four consecutive years unless he has no access to a Bible-obedient church. If poor health keeps a person at home, the church should provide that a brother or sister can have communion there; or even in a hospital if needs be. Being part of communion services for over 50 years has been a real blessing to my life. I would not want to miss the service.

7. To follow the Lord and deny self. "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). We need to be willing to sacrifice things of

this life that hinder our Christian life, and we should take time to pray and ask God's direction in all our decisions. In Mark 8:38 Jesus reminds the Christian not to be ashamed to follow Jesus and to do what the Bible teaches.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father; but by me" (John 14:6). In John 3:16 we read, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the message that we as Christians tell to the world—that Jesus is God's Son, and that a faith and belief in Jesus is the only way to be saved from going to eternal hell fire. After being born again we then practice His commandments. May we continue to make much of our blessed Lord and to look for His second coming when we will see Jesus in glory. We read in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." I am looking forward to that day. ■

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Church Planting: The Focal Point of Our Efforts

by Brandon F. Smith

Church planting consumes a lot of thought, time, and energy.

Often, questions arise as to the most important focal point of thought, time, and energy in church planting. Answers come from all different directions and types of people.

How does a church planter decipher all these answers and know where to begin or focus a majority of his thought, time, and energy? Biblical clarity always helps in answering these questions. Remember

Jesus eating with the disciples after His resurrection and the conversation with Peter?

He said to Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). These words of Jesus must ring in the pastor's ears and especially pastors of church plants.

Peter directs the same commandment to the elders of the dispersed churches in Pontus and Galatia: "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily,

according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness” (1 Peter 5:2, NAS). Certainly Peter, in the directive to shepherd the flock, speaks in all-encompassing manner relating to the whole of pastoral duties.

Yet a shepherd’s main responsibility in the tending of the sheep is to lead them to solid nutritional food. John Owen writes: “The care of preaching the gospel was committed to Peter, and in him unto all true pastors of the church, under the name of ‘feeding,’ John 21:15-17.”

Therefore, all true pastors need to feed the flock. The flock does not need the latest tactic or gimmick. Sheep need feeding and shepherds possess the ability to lead them to the spiritual nourishment necessary to sustain life in a sinful world.

What food should pastors feed the children of God? Pastors need not look any further than the God/Man. Jesus refers to Himself as the “bread of life” and the water He gives will leave a person never thirsting. Throughout the gospels Jesus refers to Himself as the Shepherd and the sustenance for the sheep.

Do not forget John’s words in his gospel when he writes, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). John’s words convey the answer to many church planting questions.

Pastors, serve the people the whole counsel of God’s Word. Exposit texts of the Scripture and take every opportunity to give them Christ Jesus.

Charles McIlvaine writes, “Begin at once with Christ. . . . Astronomers, when they teach the solar system, begin with the sun. Thence to the related and dependent orbits is easy.”

Feed them the person and work of Christ rightly, and then surrounding doctrine will follow properly. John Owen states, “The first and principal duty of a pastor is to *feed the flock* by diligent preaching of the Word. It is a promise relating to the new testament, that God would give unto his church *pastors*

according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding’ (Jeremiah 3:15). This is by teaching or preaching the word, and no otherwise.”

Owen helps us to understand the main focus of feeding the sheep. He believed in the centrality of the Word of God and therefore pointed pastors to their main duty in feeding the sheep—diligent preaching of the Word. The last part of Owen’s statement gives no other focus but preaching the Word of God as the primary role of the pastor. Therefore pastors that are planting churches need not roam or drift from this biblical prescription when planting a church.

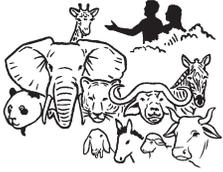
Looking for help in the forest of church planting comes naturally. Pastors have concerns about the viability and success of what transpires in the church. They desire for church plants to succeed and for people to enjoy the church for a lifetime. Struggles occur for the people in the church as well.

Pastors see the sheep hearing and continuing to struggle with the same issues throughout their lives. They frequently speculate as to the reality of any spiritual accomplishment in the lives of these people. This often does not take long in the life of a church plant.

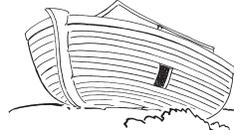
Several years pass, filled with the exuberance of new experiences for many people in the church, including the pastor. Facilities are built or purchased and some new faces come in to the life of the church, but after several years strife raises its ugly head. Some people start to wane as time goes by. People do not see the results they expected or wanted in the church or their lives.

Most of these struggles in a church plant come due to faulty expectations of the pastor, the people, or a combination of the two. John Owen writes, “A man is a pastor unto them whom he leads by pastoral teaching, and to no more; and he that doth not so feed is no pastor . . .

(continued on page 32)



Beginning Issues



“Vestigial” Organs: Are They Useless?

by John Mullett

Do you want to lose weight? Maybe you could just get rid of some spare body parts like your appendix or maybe your tonsils? After all they're just leftovers (vestigial) that have lost their functionality, right? Oh, wait; maybe we had better take a closer look. What is a “vestigial organ” and why is it important? A classic definition of vestigial is, “*An organ that once was useful in an animal's evolutionary past, but now is useless or very close to useless.*”¹ Additional or revised definitions may include points such as, “. . . diminished in size during its evolution because the function it served decreased in importance or became totally unnecessary.”² Do humans really have vestigial organs? Are they evidence of evolution? If they have no apparent purpose, why are they there? These are some of the questions I would like to discuss in this month's article.

The influence of evolutionary thinking led many to believe that humans had many vestigial organs. As late as 1925, at the famous Tennessee *Scopes Trial*, claims were made that humans have no less than 180 of these vestigial structures. Some examples of so-called vestigial organs in humans included the appendix, the tonsils, the wisdom teeth, the pineal gland, and the thymus. Today that list of 180 is down to virtually zero³ as one by one scientific research has revealed their functions, many of them

playing a vital purpose for optimum health.

One of the most familiar of these vestigial organs is the appendix. For many years it was viewed as having no real function in humans and even considered a liability because of the complications we can experience when it gets infected (appendicitis). Because of this belief, along with the ability of the human body to live apparently healthy lives (especially adults) after the removal of the appendix, doctors have been quick to remove it. In 2002 the *Associated Press* circulated an article warning readers that doctors often misdiagnose other ailments as “appendicitis” and opt for removal. (A major study found that 15% of removed appendixes were normal.)⁴ By 1976 medical textbooks were beginning to admit the appendix had functions, and by 1995 the authors of one such textbook were emphatic about the functions of the appendix.⁵ However, widespread perception has been slow to change. In the 1997 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* the appendix was still described as follows: “*The appendix does not serve any useful purpose as a digestive organ in humans, and it is believed to be gradually disappearing in the human species over evolutionary time.*”⁶ *MSN Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2008* acknowledges the following: “*Then in 2007 a group of scientists announced that the appendix houses*

beneficial bacteria essential to the digestive system. According to this research, the appendix repopulates the gut with healthy bacteria in response to conditions such as dysentery and diarrhea.”

Again we see the importance of starting our thinking from the Bible as we explore the world we live in and as we interpret the evidence we find. The appendix was designed to perform a specific function (it’s actually highly specialized in what it does) and has been filling that purpose since the beginning of time and the creation of man. Many people have had their tonsils removed unnecessarily because of the belief they served no real function. That belief is still fairly widespread today. How much money could have been saved and in some cases more/new problems avoided if our thinking had been biblical vs. influenced by evolution. (Some studies show there may be more respiratory problems after tonsils are removed.) Let’s remember, when something is not readily apparent to us, such as the function of the appendix was for so many years, it doesn’t mean there is not a purpose or function for it. Rather as mere mortals, fallen beings living in a fallen world, let us be humble enough to recognize we simply may not yet have enough data or knowledge to know its full purpose. If we do our due diligence with that awareness we will not be as likely to make hasty decisions we might later regret. Let’s study the handiwork of our Creator with a desire to know Him and His ways to glorify Him! ■

1. Bergman, Jerry, *Do Any Vestigial Structures Exist in Humans?*, CEN Technical Journal 14(2):95 2000.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
4. Matthews, Michael, Human Appendix—Just Can’t Get No Respect, <http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs2002/0718appendix.asp#ftn1>.
5. Ham and Weiland, Your Appendix—It’s There for a Reason, *Creation* 20(1):41-42 December 1997.
6. New *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1:491, 1997.

Church Planting . . . cont’d.

Without this no man will be able to give a comfortable account of the pastoral office at the last day.”

Owen points readers to the central focus of the pastorate as feeding the sheep, by preaching. He places the responsibility square on the shoulders of the pastor to preach God’s Word to the sheep. His comment may seem blunt or even harsh in accountability, but in reality it spreads encouragement and edification.

Owen does not place unbiblical expectations on the preacher. He does not expect pastors to head up so many functions in the church that they lose the ability to focus their time, thought, and energy on preaching. Pastors continue to make relationships with the people, but do not lose focus on the fact that you are commanded to feed the sheep.

Preaching is the means by which God saves the lost, corrects, rebukes, and encourages the Christian (Romans 10:14, 15; 2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Martin Lloyd Jones intimated that preaching delivers the best hope for helping people with problems. He does not state that people need no personal time. He seeks to reveal that to focus most of your time, thought, and energy on personal counseling goes against the biblical mandate. Read his stirring thoughts on the subject in “Preaching and Preachers” pages 37 through 39. Pastors find encouragement that the most important expectations come from the Scripture.

Church members, encourage your pastor in the biblical expectations. Church plants, seek to employ biblical expectations, for your pastor, your church, and yourselves from the beginning.

Lastly, place a majority of your thought, time, and energy on preaching the whole counsel of God and persevering beyond unbiblical expectations. Preachers, keep preaching! ■

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How Young Is the Young Earth?

by John D. Morris

According to the mainstream Big Bang idea, our universe abruptly sprang into existence some 15 billion years ago, sending matter careening through space. After millions of years it had cooled enough to coalesce into billions of rotating proto galactic-discs, and much later into stars. Over the billions of years, some stars underwent super nova, spewing material back into space, which later coalesced into second-generation stars, some of which likewise exploded, leading to third-generation stars like our sun. The planets are comprised of leftover stardust which didn't fall into the sun.

Even though our earth and its solar system is thought to be about 4.6 billion years old, it is much younger than the first- and second-generation stars, the galaxies, and sub-atomic particles shooting everywhere through space. Indeed, hardly anything is younger than earth.

Conversely, the Bible indicates that the creation of all things was accomplished in a six-day period just a few thousand years ago. The earth was created on Day One while the sun, moon, and stars were created on Day Four. Since thousands is less than billions, the term "Young Earth" has come to describe the recent creation position.

At a recent seminar, my friend, Mr. Tom Godfrey, challenged me on the use of the term "Young Earth" for the following reasons:

First, according to our creationist perspective, nothing in all of creation is older than the earth, because it was created "in the beginning" (Genesis 1:1). Consequently, if the earth is young, then everything else is as young or even younger. According to the Big Bang idea, the universe itself is much older than the

earth, so in their model the earth could be considered young in comparison. So for them, the descriptor has real meaning. Only by comparing a few thousand years with over four billion years as the age of the earth in two distinct perspectives can we rationalize the idea that the earth is "young." The validity of the term depends entirely on the existence of the two perspectives, both of which are assumed to be viable.

Second, consider a "new" building. Can we also call it a "young" building? I do not think so. A building can be old, but it cannot be young. We reserve the term *young* for things that are alive and growing toward maturity. Inanimate objects do not qualify, because they are at their best and full-sized when first constructed.

So what term would be more appropriate than *young*? Terms like *new* and *recent* avoid the second problem, but not the first. If the earth is new, what can be old? What came into existence less recently, from our perspective? The creation of the earth is the least recent event in history.

A dilemma indeed. I am not proposing we drop the terms *young earth* and *old earth*, for they are descriptive and well established. Tom suggests we call ourselves "historic-earth creationists," not only because it is accurate, but it acknowledges the true history of Scripture. Meanwhile, considering the term helps reinforce an important truth. ■

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