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THE SWORD AND TRUMPET 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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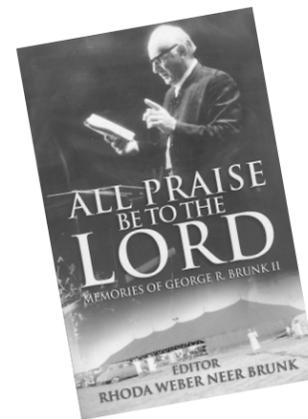
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Person of the Month:

Priscilla Mullins

(1602-1682)

In England during the early 1600s, Christians had to worship as the ruler directed or face arrest. In addition, poor people worked on farms that they did not own. To ensure a brighter future for their children, a group of Christians decided to voyage to the New World. Although called Separatists in their day, they later became known as Pilgrims.

Two ships, the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell*, set out because it was dangerous to make the Atlantic crossing in a single vessel. However, the *Speedwell* sprang a leak and had to turn back. Some of the passengers transferred to the *Mayflower*. The 102 passengers and 25 crew members occupied a space of about 2,500 square feet—hardly more room than in a good-sized, single-family dwelling.

Priscilla Mullins at age 17 was the oldest of the 11 girls aboard the ship. She traveled with her father, mother, and younger brother Joseph. Her father was a shoe cobbler.

In October a fierce storm struck. The rain and ocean spray drenched everyone with icy water. Their clothes, food, and bedding became soaked. The rolling made it too dangerous to start a fire to cook food. For 30 days, everyone had to eat cold hardtack biscuits and salt pork.

The storm blew the ship off course. Instead of the warmer climate of Virginia, the ship landed far north at Cape Cod. Rather than returning to the stormy Atlantic, the Pilgrims decided to begin their settlement in that area.

The settlers at Plymouth suffered through an unusually harsh winter. Worn out and feeble, they fell to disease. Every member of three families died. The first governor, John Carver, died. Priscilla Mullins lost not only her mother and father but also her brother Joseph. Like Priscilla, two other girls, Mary Chilton and Elizabeth Tilly, also lost every member of their families. Priscilla took a lead in caring for the children who had lost their parents.

Two of the girls, Ellen More, age eight, and her sister Mary, age four, were there because of divorce. Earlier in England, having found that his children were actually those of another man, Samuel More divorced his wife, gained custody of the children, and then punished his wife by arranging for her children to be sent away to America. Without mother, without father, little Ellen and Mary died the first winter.

Captain Christopher Jones of the *Mayflower* anchored in Plymouth harbor for the winter so his ship could be used as shelter. In March, he announced he was leaving for England. He offered passage to any Pilgrims who wanted to return. None accepted his offer.

John Alden (?-1687), one of the crew, chose to stay with the Pilgrims. He was the cooper, or barrel maker. Almost everything was shipped in barrels because in an age when human muscles did much of the work, it was easier to roll a barrel than lift a box. Alden came from a wealthy family, and as a young man he had studied for the law. However, he became interested in woodworking when a garden house was built on his uncle's estate. He dropped out of school to learn carpentry. His job on the *Mayflower* was his first as a cooper.

John Alden was the youngest unmarried man in the crew, and Priscilla Mullins was the oldest unmarried girl. Later events suggest that the 18-year-old girl was the reason for his decision to stay in Plymouth rather than return to England.

The Pilgrims who remained struggled to plant crops, fish, and hunt game. In the fall of 1621, they had reason to be thankful. Seven houses, a meeting building, *(cont'd on page 4)*

“I Have Found the Book of the Law”

by Mervin Brubacher

When young Josiah became king, his first action of spiritual reform was to send a crew to clean and repair the temple. In the process the cleaners found a treasure, an old Book. *“And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it”* (2 Kings 22:8).

This “small” thing—*finding* the right Book, and *reading* it, grew into a revival which was unprecedented in that time. Not only was the truth found, it was embraced, and it’s so important for us to recognize the significance of this.

Our North American society was founded upon a Judeo-Christian platform, and this gave people a belief structure upon which their lives could be anchored. This belief structure embraced the knowledge of God, and of salvation through Jesus. Perhaps too often that truth was not lived out, but the basic understanding was there that God has brought a gift to this world in the person of Jesus Christ—a gift that has never been paralleled.

This belief structure of society had a benefit which our younger generation is not seeing. There was a generally accepted concept of morality in society, and it influenced how people determined what was considered right and what was wrong.

Today, however, our children and youth are growing up in a completely different atmosphere—an atmosphere which

is shaping their contemporaries in the world who are moving ever further away from God and truth. There has been a vast shift in society’s foundational values, with the common perception that right and wrong are relative.

In Josiah’s time, it was the finding and reading of a Book which brought people back to God and truth. Today, I am afraid it may all too often be picking up and reading the wrong books that contributes to people’s downfall.

There are two things that are especially influential in shaping culture today—music and books. We live in an age when both of these are available like they have never been before. Music has been given wings in mass-produced recordings, and books likewise.

Satan has taken hold of those issues, and has made havoc of the world’s peoples—by magnifying sin, and subtly presenting erroneous doctrine, in a magnitude never before seen.

The answer to Josiah’s dilemma—how to lead the people back to God—was largely answered as the right Book was picked up and read. Truth was revealed, and God moved to further direct in His way.

“Lord, give us the courage to turn our backs to wrong music, and wrong books, and help us and our children, pick up the right book, and read it.”

The alternative is too devastating to comprehend. ■

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Shopping

by Rodney Stearns

We have become a shopping society. We shop for tires, cars, clothes, shoes, food, exercise equipment, movies, and tools. We buy what we like, and we refuse what we do not like. We have conditioned ourselves to pick and choose. We shop for a church and for spiritual truths. Many professing Christians even tend to regard the Bible as a mail-order catalog. They flip through it randomly; they turn pages selectively. They are quick to say, "Oh, I like that!" and just as quick to say, "I sure don't like that!" On another page they say, with a gleam in their eyes, "I'd sure like to show that to so-and-so!" While across the page, they spot a precious promise and say, "Oh, that's for me!" Some things look attractive until they see that it would cost them all they have to get it, then they say, "I wish they would have a sale on that! I like it, but the price is outrageous!"

For many the Bible is a wish book, for others it is a stay-at-home-shopper's guide. They search its pages for the cheapest way to get to Heaven. They carefully scan its offers in order to choose the most convenient way to be a Christian. Many seem to think they will

find an order blank somewhere between its covers where they can list the things they need or want most. Many people want to customize their orders to suit themselves. They will take all of God's love they can get. God's mercy and patience are generally requested in large amounts too. They order blessings by the barrelful; they never seem to have

For many the Bible is a wish book. . . . They search its pages for the cheapest way to get to Heaven. They carefully scan its offers in order to choose the most convenient way to be a Christian.

enough. God's will and God's way are frequently ordered, but with adjustments desired according to the shopper's whims. These often get stuck in the closet or returned with a note, "Doesn't fit." Many seem to think that God's promises are "freebies," so they seldom acknowledge the price that goes with them. Victories, spiritual strength, overcoming power, and revival are wanted in cans that say, "Instant," and directions that say, "Little or no preparation necessary!" Some dicker over the prices and ask for discounts as though they were trying to purchase a secondhand salvation or salvage a cast-off experience at a garage sale.

The "How to" sections always catch a lot of attention as people look for easy, quick fixes. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers

of men” is a popular one. “Take up [thy] cross” is viewed a little more skeptically. “Feed my sheep” sounds easy and fun. “Be ye holy” is intriguing, but some feel it is priced so high that we can never really get it. Some think that “whosoever will” sounds like one-size-fits-all. Others like the build-your-own salvation plan, so they select this and that, trying to put together what they think will be suitable, while cutting out the things that seem like extras.

Some things are obviously everlasting, but others are certainly not in vogue today. After all, this catalog is for everybody, so one would expect considerable variety. Somehow most consumers think that what it offers is supposed to make life better, comfortable, easy, prosperous, and successful. Then comes the section that says, “Endure hardness as a good soldier”; that seems to lack charismatic appeal, yet the athletic and military types may find it appealing.

“Covet earnestly the best gifts” catches everybody’s attention and seems to assure

that there will always be a long queue, with those who were slow to get in line obsessively repeating as a mantra, “The last shall be first!” On the other hand, there never seems to be a fear that the supply will run out, for we know that He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” Expectations run high as there seems to be assurance that our orders will always be overfilled—no need to worry when our wants and needs become synonymous.

Tasters and samplers outnumber servants and soldiers. Those who cast their cares on Him are far less likely to “cast [their] pearls before swine.” Certainly the Bible is the Book of books, our road map, our instruction manual. When we study it and apply its principles to our daily lives, we live holy and experience His fellowship in the quandaries of life.

Shop if you will, but a word to the wise: “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” for “faithful is he that calleth you!” ■

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■ **PRISCILLA MULLINS . . . cont’d from page 1** ■

and a watchtower were finished. The new governor, William Bradford, said, “Our wheat did prove well, and, God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn.” He declared the harvest feast that became the first Thanksgiving.

The next year, John Alden asked to marry Priscilla Mullins. She had no father, so he asked permission of the other men in the village for her hand. At the wedding, she wore one of her mother’s dresses and a pair of shoes her father had made.

The young couple stayed in Plymouth for a few years and then moved to a farm near Duxbury, a town John and his friend Miles Standish founded. He and Priscilla built a home on their property and raised 11 children. Their descendants include two presidents (John Adams and his son, John Quincy Adams) and one vice president (Dan Quayle).

Another famous descendant was the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In 1858, Longfellow embellished a family story and published *The Courtship of Miles Standish*. In Longfellow’s poem, John Alden acted as an intermediary for his friend Miles Standish to ask for the hand of Priscilla. Instead, she responded, “Pray thee, why don’t you speak for yourself, John?”

John Alden served as a surveyor of highways, assistant to the governor of Massachusetts, and twice served as deputy governor. When he died in 1687, he was the last surviving signer of America’s first freedom document, the *Mayflower Compact*.

Priscilla demonstrated strength of character at a pivotal moment in American history. Despite concerns that the young women would face a greater risk of death during the voyage and first year in the New World, Priscilla and the other girls proved their resilience. Proportionately they suffered fewer deaths than any other group. Only the two More girls died.

The Pilgrims were profoundly religious. Despite the urgency of building homes and planting crops, they took time to worship God. Each week one of the men blew a horn from the roof of the meetinghouse. It called the people to worship. All day Sunday, the Pilgrims would put aside their work for worship.

John Hudson Tiner

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

NOVEMBER 7, 2010

Our Awesome God

Psalm 66:1-12

This psalm is a song or hymn of praise to God for His awesome deeds past and present. Although this psalm does refer to God's deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea, the immediate initiation for the psalm is unclear. Some commentators believe it may have been written in response to God's deliverance from Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem (Isaiah 36, 37), or in praise of God's deliverance of Israel from Babylonian bondage. However, for our study, the initial setting is not as important as the content and purpose of the psalm. It is a psalm of praise to God in recognition of His power and the preservation of His people. The lesson for us is clear. We are to praise God for what He has done for us in delivering us from the enemy of our souls.

Verses 1 and 2 call on all people of the earth to sing joyful praise to God, to honor His name, to "make his praise glorious." This is in recognition of His awesome deeds which cause His enemies to cringe before His power and majesty. Verse 4 speaks prophetically of the time when "all the earth shall worship [God]" and sing praise to Him (see Romans 14:11). Selah. So let it be.

Verses 5 and 6 refer to one of God's awesome deeds of power in dividing the Red Sea so the children of Israel could walk across on dry ground. This is cause for praising Him, and "there did we rejoice in him." God rules over nature and the nations. God will cause those who rebel against Him to shrink in terror before His majesty and power (v. 3).

The psalmist then (v. 8) calls upon the

people of God, Israel, to bless God and "make the voice of his praise to be heard."

This parallels the injunction in verse 1 to make a joyful noise unto God. The psalmist recognizes God's preservation of His people (v. 9). He holds their lives in His hand and stabilizes their goings.

But God has also tested His people. He tried them as silver is tried in the crucible. The purpose of that testing was to eliminate the dross and to purify them to become His holy people. He allowed them to suffer affliction. They have been downtrodden by their enemies. They went through severe persecution as part of God's refinement process. All the while God was in control, not allowing more than they could endure, constantly monitoring them and their responses.

While Israel recognized the difficult experiences God allowed them to go through, they also acknowledged God's overriding protection and care, and that eventually He brought them into a place of abundance. This may refer to the exodus experience, or other testings and resulting blessings through which God led them.

Perhaps the greatest lesson for us is to realize that in spite of testings which may seem onerous, God is always in control and will preserve us and bring us through the refinement process as pure silver. For this we should bless and praise our awesome God.

For thought and discussion

1. Why is singing such an excellent method of praising God? What does it do for the singer?
2. Israel could point to specific acts of God's delivering power over which to rejoice. Do you have experiences in your life of God's specific acts of deliverance? Are they too

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- precious to share with others?
3. Think carefully over why God may allow us at times to go through severe testing. Discuss.
 4. Times of testing can do several things to us. What is so important to maintaining a proper attitude and response to testing?
 5. In your mind, what is the most awesome display of God's power?

Lesson emphasis: To praise God for His awesome power in delivering and preserving His people.

Key verse: 8

NOVEMBER 14, 2010

The Eternal God Is Our Refuge

Psalm 90:1-12

This psalm, written by Moses, is perhaps the earliest of the psalms, pre-dating King David by some 400 years. Its focus is on the eternal nature of God contrasted with the frailty and transience of human life. While written from Moses' experience with Israel in the wilderness, its message carries import for every generation. Scholars assume this psalm was written in response to the sentence passed upon the Israelites that the unbelieving generation should die in the wilderness for their lack of trust in God's promised care and protection (see Numbers 14). Note that the title calls the author, Moses, "the man of God." Moses enjoyed a close relationship with this God of whom he wrote.

Moses recognized that from the Patriarchs on through the wanderings of Israel, the eternal God had been a refuge for His people, a shelter, a place of rest and security. He was always with them, always available even when they had no permanent dwelling place. This eternal God, self-existent, pre-existent before creation, provides constant refuge for His people in every generation.

Man's life, by contrast, is fleeting. He soon returns to the dust from which he was formed. Man is swept away on the tide of time, passing as rapidly as a watch in the night. His life is likened to a blade of grass which springs up in the morning, flourishes

for a brief moment, and is then cut down and dies. Though man counts time by the passing of generations, the eternal God is not affected by time. Time is meaningless to Him who is of eternity.

Verses 7-10 seem to refer to Israel's unfaithfulness and God's judgment on their sin. Because of their lack of trust they were consumed by God's anger there in the wilderness. Moses recognizes that man's sin cannot be hid from God. He sees it all, even what we ourselves may not readily recognize. The implication is that since life is fleeting and uncertain, we should be careful to always maintain a proper relationship to our holy God. God's wrath on sin is certain.

God has allotted man a certain life span. And the vigor of youth all too soon yields to the burdens and weaknesses of old age. But even for those who achieve an extended life span, it is nothing more than an eye blink with God. We soon fly away and a new generation takes its place upon the stage of time.

But life, regardless of its brevity, has value. So we are instructed here in verse 12 to evaluate our lives, our motives, and expend our energies and time only on worthwhile efforts.

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past.

Only what's done for Christ will last."

For thought and discussion

1. Have you made the eternal God your refuge? He is always there. He always cares. Go to Him in your struggles. See also Deuteronomy 33:27.
2. This psalm should impress upon us that we cannot hide from God. He sees us everywhere. He knows our inmost thoughts. That knowledge should give direction to our motives and actions.
3. Have you ever experienced a situation where the brevity of life faced you in stark reality? What did this experience do for you? Perhaps some class discussion.
4. Whether you are 30, 60, or 80 there comes a time to die. Have you given sober thought to that day? Are you prepared? Think seriously.
5. How do we "number" our days? Discuss ways we can make our brief lives count most heavily in God's service.

Lesson emphasis: To value life and expend our allotted years wisely in service to the eternal God who is our ever-present refuge in the struggles and storms of life.

Key verses: 1 and 12

NOVEMBER 21, 2010

God Protects and Delivers

Psalms 91:1-6, 9-16

In last Sunday's lesson from Psalm 90 we noted that the eternal God is our refuge, the One to whom we can fly in times of distress or struggle. In today's lesson from Psalm 91 we see the security of the one who constantly dwells with the most High. There is constant protection under the shadow of His wings, borrowing the imagery of the protection of a mother hen over her brood. He is a strong fortress, an impenetrable barrier between us and encroaching danger (see Psalm 61:3). It is true we can always flee to God for protection from life's dangers, but how much better to dwell continually in the security of His presence and care.

The imagery here in the first six verses is that of strength, protection, and security. In Psalm 18:2 the Psalmist David refers to God as his rock, an immovable barrier between his soul and danger. God will deliver us from the snares that would entrap and destroy us. We face dangers seen and unseen, yet our God is able and willing to deliver us from all dangers. We find security beneath His overshadowing wings, shielding us from the attack of those bent on our destruction.

Nothing can dismay us when we rest secure in our powerful God. We need not fear the terror by night, the arrow by day, nor pestilence nor wasting destruction. "There is no limit to God's protection because He has full authority over all things that happen on earth" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*).

In the next set of verses (9-13) it seems the writer is simply giving testimony to his own experience of God's deliverance from danger and difficulties. (Some feel that the author of this psalm is also Moses and that he here refers to Israel's deliverance from the plagues

in Egypt.) We also note that in Satan's temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:5, 6) he quoted verses 11 and 12. Whatever the situation, the thrust is that the one who abides under the shadow of the Almighty has the assurance of His protecting care. How comforting to the believer to know that God's angels keep constant watch over their lives.

In verses 14-16 God is speaking. He explains why He protects and delivers the ones who put their trust in Him. It is because that individual has set his unqualified life upon the most high God. He is intimately acquainted with God, his life is bound to Him and bound up in Him. Therefore, when he calls upon God in times of distress or need, God is obliged to honor his request and deliver him from trouble.

Because of this intimate relationship, "The Lord assures His own that they will enjoy themselves in this life and in the life to come" (*EBC*). The reward of dwelling under the shadow of the Almighty not only provides comfort and protection for the here and now, it reaches also into the eternal realm.

What a comfort to rest in God's protecting care.

For thought and discussion

1. Where do you find security—in your own efforts, or within the shelter of the Almighty? Think carefully about your priorities.
2. Have you ever experienced the protection of God's angels? Perhaps some class sharing would be in order.
3. Why is it that at times God does not seem to deliver His people from danger, illness, or distress? What does this psalm teach us about security even in such circumstances? Discuss.
4. Some people have taken the promises of this psalm, as well as of similar passages, to give them the liberty to place themselves purposely into dangerous situations, trusting the Lord to deliver them. What do you think about that?
5. Note the stipulation in verse 14 for securing God's protection and deliverance. Have you done your part so God feels obliged to protect you? Think about it.

Lesson emphasis: The security of one who puts full trust in God's care and protection.

Key verses: 14-16

NOVEMBER 28, 2010

Our Omniscient God

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-16, 23, 24

This psalm of David is a hymn of praise to God for His universal presence (vv. 7-12) and infinite knowledge. While acknowledging God's supreme and infinite knowledge, David still marvels that God knows him so well, in fact better than he knows himself. David also marvels at the intimate relationship possible with such a high, holy, and omniscient God. He also wants to be sure that his life is worthy of God's cognizance.

David admits that God knows all about him—when he sits down, when he gets up, and is intimately acquainted with his thoughts and desires. God is also aware of the path of David's life and on that path guards him from danger and harm. God knows the words of his mouth, even before he speaks. God's protecting presence encompasses David's life. His comforting, guiding hand is upon Him (see Hebrews 4:13).

David admits that the awareness and scope of such infinite, divine knowledge escapes all human comprehension. It is far beyond him, and yet he marvels that such an all-knowing, wise, powerful God cares about those so inferior to Him. It is more than he can understand with the limited knowledge of the human mind. (In verses 7-12, not in our lesson text, David explains the impossibility of escaping from God's all-seeing eye.)

In verses 13-16 David acknowledges that God was both aware of him and concerned for him even before birth. Before David's personal awareness God knew all about him. Therefore, in light of God's knowledge and care, David says, "I will praise thee." That praise no doubt carried thankfulness for life itself and for God's intimate knowledge of him and His concern and care for him.

God knew David in embryonic form, in the womb of his mother. And as David contemplated the intricacies of the human body

he admitted that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." No chance happenings here. We are designed by an all-wise Creator, One whose knowledge far surpasses that of the human intellect. David acknowledges that before birth, he was recorded in God's book. God was aware of him and had his life planned out for him. David also recognizes (verses 17 and 18) that this awesome God thinks about him. Therefore, whenever he awakens, his thoughts turn to God.

In light of God's knowledge of his every thought, word, motive, and action, David is concerned that his life measure up to God's knowledge of him. Therefore he asks God to search his heart, to measure his thoughts, and evaluate his life in light of God's standards. Then if He finds something disagreeable to His standard, David wants to know so he can root it out. His desire is to be fully conformed to God's will. He wants to be certain he is on the way to everlasting life. And that should be the desire of everyone of us.

For thought and discussion

1. How does our awareness of God's complete knowledge of us affect the way we live? Discuss.
2. Has your awareness of God's infinite knowledge of your life ever brought you up short in the awareness of your need for change?
3. Look up and read (or sing) the hymn "Lord, Thou Hast Searched" based on this psalm. Let it speak to your soul.
4. There is only one answer to human existence. Be sure you are able with Biblical knowledge to confute the arguments of the evolutionists and pre-choice elements of our society.
5. I once heard a preacher say that verses 23 and 24 of Psalm 139 are a dangerous prayer. He went on to explain that if we pray it in honesty, God will answer and show us areas that need attention. I've found it to be true. Have you tried it?

Lesson emphasis: Acknowledging with awe God's omniscience, omnipresence, and power, and committing ourselves to be pure in His sight.

Key verses: 23 and 24 ■

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

News Snippets

The Environmental Protection Agency is considering regulating farm dust. – *News9*

FIFA has launched an investigation of North Korea's soccer organization after it appears that the players were tortured for ignominiously losing the World Cup.

– *U.K. Daily Mail*

An Iranian woman was sentenced to death by stoning for committing adultery. After an international outcry, the charges against her were changed to complicity in her husband's murder, and death by hanging. In contrast, the man with whom she committed adultery and who actually killed her husband, has been convicted and is serving a prison term.

– *AFP*

USA Today analyzed private sector pay versus public sector wages. For the same jobs, government employees earn roughly double their private sector counterparts. – *USA Today*

The Department of Justice advertised a job opening for a "Native American Medicine Man" familiar with "medicine wheel, sweat lodge, the sacred pipe, and eagle feathers" to "conduct Native American ceremonies and provide instruction . . . in the Native American Faith" to inmates at a prison in Duluth, MN. – *The Smoking Gun*

"A Saudi judge has asked several hospitals in the country whether they could damage a man's spinal cord as punishment after he was convicted of attacking another man with a cleaver and paralyzing him, the brother of the victim said Thursday." – *A spine for a spine, AP*

A Kenyan man was jailed in Tanzania for trying to sell albino Africans to Tanzanian witch doctors who use albinos' body parts and blood in potions and witchcraft rituals. At least 53 albinos in Tanzania have been killed since 2007 for such use. – *Reuters*

"A U. S. district court issued a preliminary injunction on [August 23] stopping federal funding of human embryonic stem cell research, in a slap to the Obama administration's new guidelines on the sensitive issue." The Obama Administration tried to circumvent the law that doesn't allow the federal government to fund stem cell research that kills babies. – *Reuters*

A recent DNA test of Hitler's closest relatives show that Hitler was of African and Jewish descent, two of the groups he tried to exterminate. – *U.K. Daily Telegraph*

Ahmed Sharif, a NYC cabbie, picked up Michael Enright, who had worked as a reporter in Afghanistan. Enright asked Sharif if he was a Muslim and when he answered that he was, Enright began to rant against Muslims and then lunged into the front seat and started to slash Sharif with a knife. Sharif managed to escape, lock Enright in the cab, and summon a policeman to arrest Enright. – *CBS New York*

"A Saudi couple tortured their Sri Lankan maid, after she complained of a too heavy workload, by hammering 24 nails into her hands, legs and forehead, officials said on [August 26]. Nearly 2 million Sri Lankans sought employment overseas last year and around 1.4 million, mostly maids, were employed in the Middle East. Many have complained of physical abuse or harassment. L.T. Ariyawathi, a 49-year-old mother of three, returned on [August 20] after five months in Saudi Arabia." – *Reuters*

A 14-year-old Baltimore girl, who was robbing two grown men at gunpoint, shot the one man fatally when he laughed about how young she was. Family of the girl said she has an uncontrollable temper. – *The Baltimore Sun*

Gay groups like Pink Menno gathered at Chicago Community Mennonite Church to

formulate their strategy for the 2011 Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly for pressing for the full inclusion of LGBT people in MCUSA. — *The Mennonite*

For the last four years, a church in Warsaw, OH, has protested with bullhorns outside a local strip club. The strip club has struck back with weekly Sunday morning protests by bikini-clad strippers. — *The Columbus Dispatch*

A new court ruling allows police to place GPS trackers on anyone’s vehicle without a search warrant. — *TIME*

* * * * *

Famous Anti-Theist Gets Cancer

Christopher Hitchens is a person that says while he’s an atheist, he prefers anti-theist which “is someone who’s very relieved that there’s no evidence for this proposition [of God].” Wikipedia writes that “he argues that the concept of God or a supreme being is a totalitarian belief that destroys individual freedom, and that free expression and scientific discovery should replace religion . . .” He is also author of *NYT* Bestselling book *God Is Not Great*. In light of this, his response when he found out that he has terminal cancer, is very enlightening. Can you feel the hopelessness, despair, and meaninglessness that his worldview has brought to his life? Cancer has brought that hopelessness into sharp relief. Listen to his words in the magazine *Vanity Fair*:

“In one way, I suppose, I have been ‘in denial’ for some time, knowingly burning the candle at both ends and finding that it often gives a lovely light. But for precisely that reason, I can’t see myself smiting my brow with shock or hear myself whining about how it’s all so unfair: I have been taunting the Reaper into taking a free scythe in my direction and have now succumbed to something so predictable and banal that it bores even me. Rage would be beside the point for the same reason. Instead, I am badly oppressed by a gnawing sense of waste. I had real plans for my next decade and felt I’d worked hard enough to earn it. Will I really not live to see my children married? To watch the World Trade Center rise again? To read—if not indeed

write—the obituaries of elderly villains like Henry Kissinger and Joseph Ratzinger? But I understand this sort of non-thinking for what it is: sentimentality and self-pity. Of course my book hit the best-seller list on the day that I received the grimmest of news bulletins, and for that matter the last flight I took as a healthy-feeling person (to a fine, big audience at the Chicago Book Fair) was the one that made me a million-miler on United Airlines, with a lifetime of free upgrades to look forward to. But irony is my business and I just can’t see any ironies here: would it be less poignant to get cancer on the day that my memoirs were remaindered as a box-office turkey, or that I was bounced from a coach-class flight and left on the tarmac? To the dumb question ‘Why me?’ the cosmos barely bothers to return the reply: ‘Why not?’ ”

Beyond the stunning clarity that Hitchens brings to the results of rejecting God, it is interesting to note that even though Hitchens doesn’t believe in God, humans are hard-wired to know the existence of God to such an extent that he can’t help himself but ending the quote above with a reference to a God-replacement (something all-encompassing, all-knowing, determinant of fate, etc.) whom he asks a question and who supplies an answer: the cosmos. (He does the same thing with the “Reaper.”) “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen . . .” “They show the work of the Law written in their hearts . . .” (Romans 1:20; 2:15, NASB).

Later in the article, he sums up his feelings, “You feel swamped with passivity and impotence: dissolving in powerlessness like a sugar lump in water.”

—Sources: *Wikipedia*, *New American Standard Bible*; excerpts from “Topic of Cancer” (<http://j.mp/TopicOfCancer>) by Christopher Hitchens in *Vanity Fair*

* * * * *

Old Order Mennonite Man Killed for Mass Rape

UK Guardian: “The road to Manitoba [community in Bolivia] is dusty and the four-hour drive terribly hot. But at its end, there is a scene from a fairy tale. Shiny milk tanks line the entrance to farmhouses set amid impeccably manicured lawns. Laughing children pass on a horse-drawn carriage

along a well-kept road without cars or lorries. Behind a gaggle of geese run a clutch of little blonde girls wearing big straw hats with dark bows and flowery dresses.

A Mennonite man from this Old Order community in Bolivia died after being hung from a pole for nine hours by his brethren who accused him of rape and abuse. He had been punished previously by being locked in a cage for offenses including mistreating his wife and children, drinking alcohol, and slacking off on farm work.

This man is thought to have been a ninth person in a mass rape case. Mennonite elders became suspicious of a Mennonite man who often showed up late for work because of oversleeping, so they followed him one night and caught him entering someone's house, preparing to drug and rape them. When they stopped and confronted him, he confessed to hundreds of rapes along with seven other men. The Mennonite community took the men and locked them in a warehouse, and considered constructing cells to hold the men, but then decided to turn them over to the Bolivian authorities. They are awaiting trial in a Bolivian jail. Seven of the men are from the Manitoba settlement.

Johann Klassen, an elder in the community said, "This was way too big to deal with. That is why we handed these people to the Bolivian authorities. We don't want them back. I thought I knew them quite well. But I remember they were not hard workers. There was always talk about those things happening here; there was a woman who said so, but no one believed her."

UK Guardian: "[A Mennonite from the Manitoba community] Carlos Knodel . . . tells me his family's scarcely believable story: Knodel's 57-year-old mother, his 29-year-old sister Angelita, who has learning difficulties, his wife, his two teenage female cousins, his aunt, and his pregnant sister-in-law have all been raped."

Knodel is questioning his belief in non-resistance saying, "If I had found this man raping my wife, I don't really know what I would have been capable of doing. That is something not to be forgiven. The Bible says everything can be forgiven, but I don't think it is easy to forgive such a thing."

UK Guardian: "This view echoes around

the community. A man named Juan tells me that he was gripped with rage after his wife was a victim of rape during her pregnancy. 'After, my wife gave birth to a premature child that fitted in the palm of my hand,' he says. 'I am not sure if he will survive or if he will have life-lasting consequences. She is traumatized. This is too painful, too painful.'

"The alleged attacker is the woman's brother, Martin Wieler, a ginger-haired, long-faced man, who is accused of raping his pregnant sister twice: the first time he threatened to kill her if she told her husband; the second time she was deeply asleep.

Wieler . . . greets me from behind the bars, with an unnerving half-smile. He is being held, together with the other seven suspects, in a single white cell. . . . The eight men are lying on thin mats on the ground. They are expressionless. 'We have done nothing and we have nothing to say,' one says.

"It is alleged that the gang raped women for about two years, some of them in neighboring Mennonite communities. 'But those colonies are more orthodox than Manitoba,' says Freddy Perez, the Santa Cruz prosecutor. 'It will be hard to make them talk to us. The women there are afraid of being pushed away by the community and their own husbands.'

"Perez says the trial is expected to start early next year; he hopes the men will serve at least 15 years behind bars, with no prospect of bail. 'I feel I need to make every possible effort as the Mennonites are very concerned about these people being left free. This is the first time they have come to us. They've been very cooperative.'"

Despite the arrests, no one in Manitoba feels secure. Bars are being put on windows and locks on doors; this in a village where houses were traditionally left wide open. The tranquility of this community has been replaced with paranoia. "There are more, there are still rapists around," Felipe, Knodel's brother, tells me. "We are living in fear now. This used to be a very peaceful community and people are scared, they cannot sleep in peace."

—Source and excerpts from "Mennonite father dies in Bolivia after being hung for nine hours" (<http://j.mp/MennoBoliviaDeath>) and "The work of the devil": crime in a remote religious community" (<http://j.mp/MennoniteRape>) in the *UK Guardian*

Crossbearing

by Ivan Martin Jr.

Crossbearing seems to be one of those concepts that has many misconceptions. What is the Christian's cross? Is our cross a personal cross that will differ from the crosses other Christians are called to bear? What is the association of self-denial and crossbearing?

Paul referred to his preaching as the preaching of the cross—*“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 Cor. 1:18). Paul also refers to those who reject the Gospel and work against it as the enemies of the cross—*“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ”* (Philippians 3:18). The cross is only referred to in the New Testament and is the symbol of Christianity.

When Constantine saw in his dream a cross, he associated it with Christianity. Down through the history of the Christian church, the cross remains its central figure. The Catholic crucifix has Christ on the cross. The Protestant cross is without the presence of Christ. Both figures are worn and displayed by Christians. But does the symbol have anything to do with crossbearing?

The concept of crossbearing comes from the words of Christ. Matthew, Mark, and Luke have similar expressions of Jesus' call to crossbearing. *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”* (Matthew 16:24). *“And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”* (Mark 8:34). *“And whoso-*

ever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). These verses and other Scriptures make it clear that there is no true Christianity without practical expressions of denying self for the sake of following the directives of Christ.

There was a literal cross Christ carried on His way to Calvary. Carrying the cross was part of the concluding act of Christ submitting to the Father's will. It was on the cross that He gave His life and blood for the provisional atonement of the world. He subjected Himself to not only carrying the cross but also the shameful death of the cross. *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:8). But how does this relate to the Christian life and the need for us to take up our cross and follow Jesus?

The only other reference in the Gospels to crossbearing was in Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler. Mark's account in 10:21 includes the command to *“take up the cross, and follow me.”* The question still remains, What cross is in focus? Certainly a physical wooden cross is not under consideration.

As we observe the cross Jesus bore, it may give us an understanding of the cross we are to take up and carry.

1. Crossbearing follows the denial of self. Jesus' literal cross was carried after He expressed His willingness to honor the will of God above His own will. This wooden cross was made by placing a vertical beam over a horizontal beam. This typifies the need for the human will to become subject to the Divine will. When and where these two intersect, a

cross is formed. Jesus submitted His will of not wanting to face the death of the cross to the Father's will of His Son dying on the cross. Three times in Matthew 26, Christ expressed His willingness to accept the Father's will (verse 39—"nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," verse 42—"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done," verse 44—He "prayed the third time, saying the same words").

If the rich young ruler in Luke 18 would have made a similar expression as Christ did, his story would be different. It is apparent he had a personal agenda he desired to accomplish with his material means. His will was in direct opposition to the will of God. He was faced with a practical choice of denying his selfish desires by saying "No" to his plans, and saying "Yes" to the will of God. We have no record that he denied his selfish agenda and took up his cross to follow Jesus.

The first submission issue we face in the Christian life is the denying of our self interests for God's will. We cannot maintain our self interests and be a disciple of Christ. The prerequisite of cross-bearing is still—"let him deny himself." Only after we have learned to deny our carnal will can we carry our cross.

2. Crossbearing is the Christian's way of life. There was a cross Jesus bore before He faced the literal cross of Calvary. Isaiah said that Christ "*hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.*" His life was filled with bearing the grief and sorrows of humanity. He carried a cross of grief and sorrow that was not His own. This way of life concluded in a death that was illustrative of His life. He carried a cross toward Calvary which was not His own. It was God's will for Jesus to die on Calvary. Jesus' willingness to bear His cross in life is directly associated with His death on the cross.

In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*" When something is a daily experience, it becomes a way of life. It is more

than an event of the past. As we submit ourselves to the will of God, we take up a life of accomplishing His plan. The details of what God expects us to do for His kingdom interests will vary, but there is work for all. In order to do the Father's will, we must lay down our personal interests. This is where the rich young ruler failed. This is where we also are tempted to turn our backs on God. Why should we do what others are not required to do?

Peter seemed to question the cross he was to bear in John 21:18-21: "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?"* There was a cross associated with Peter's Christian life. It would not be the same as the other disciples. Each man has his own walk and his own cross to bear.

3. The cross includes suffering and hardship for the Cause of Christ.

Jesus suffered physically in carrying the cross and dying on it. Such suffering is repulsive to the natural man. The natural man desires life, comforts, and opportunities similar to those others enjoy. The cross Jesus bore denied Him these earthly experiences. Peter was also denied a comfortable life as he bore the cross God outlined for him. Every Christian's walk of life will require a forfeiture of earthly pleasures and comforts as he seeks to do the Father's will. The suffering and hardships of our cross help us identify with the cross of Jesus. Paul's desire was to "*know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of*

his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Phil. 3:10).

Paul was able to identify with the sufferings of Christ as he lived his life. His testimony seems to mirror the life of Christ. *“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong”* (2 Cor. 12:9b-10). He also said in verse 15, *“And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”* This life committed to the service of Christ was Paul’s cross experience.

We, too, need to carry a cross if we will identify with the sufferings of Christ. Since our salvation required suffering on the part of Christ, why would we think it strange that our life in Christ could not include some suffering for His purposes? The most we can suffer will fall short of the intensity of the sufferings of Christ. While we suffer less than He did, we are able to in a measure have a fellowship in what He suffered for humanity.

4. Bearing the cross precedes wearing the crown. The Hebrew writer encourages us to look *“unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb. 12:2). Jesus needed to endure a life of crossbearing and a literal cross before He could return to the glories of Heaven.

Too many people desire a place in Heaven without bearing any cross below. Such hope seems to be very faulty. The crowns spoken of in the Scriptures are for those who bore a cross of some form.

There is a crown of rejoicing for those who work in behalf of the souls of men. *“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved”* (Philippians 4:1). *“For what is our hope,*

or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (1 Thess. 2:19). Those who carry the cross of laboring for the spiritual well-being of others will be crowned.

There will be a crown for those who endured the cross of doing right. Doing right is the Christian’s way of being ready for the appearing of Christ. *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”* (2 Timothy 4:8). Whatever the weight of the cross to do right, it will be rewarded by the righteous Judge.

There will be a crown for those who faithfully bore the cross of temptation. *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him”* (James 1:12). Today the cross of temptation may be heavy, but there is a crown for the faithful.

Revelation 2:10 identifies the cross and the crown of those who physically suffered for the cause of Christ. *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* It will be worth it all, when the cross is laid down and the crown of life is received. Every martyr for Christ will feel richly rewarded for the few moments of suffering in this life.

Today is the day to bear the cross. The weight of the cross and the length of the journey is at the discretion of our Lord. In light of the cross Jesus carried for us, it is only our reasonable service to faithfully carry our small crosses for Him. May we all be found faithful in bearing our cross until we are made conformable unto his death. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Pilgrim Witness*, July 2010.

Bringing Up Children as Servants

by Simeon Rudolph

Christian parents must accept and apply some paradoxical truths to faithfully fill their God-given calling. In personal experience, we die to live and we give to gain, and in parenting we chasten to love and we rear our children as servants to develop sons and daughters.

By divine inspiration, Paul wrote that “a child, differeth nothing from a servant, . . . until the time appointed of the father” (Galatians 4:1, 2).

This parenting principle seems foreign to the natural man, but easily aligns in the spiritual mind. “Before honour is humility” (Proverbs 15:33), and “the last shall be first” (Matthew 20:16) are similar Bible truths.

What does this principle teach Christian parents?

1. Our sons and daughters are servants. This divinely planned role for mankind at Creation was not changed by the Fall. But fallen man denies and resists servanthood, still trying to claim the liar’s promise “Ye shall be as gods.” Christian parents must work to weed this falsehood from the mind of every child.

Children “go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psalm 58:3). This Bible truth is evident in the nature of a crying infant, demanding to be lord over others. Teaching the young child that he is a servant in the home is life’s first and most important lesson. Gently, yet purposefully, Mother works to establish a schedule in his life. The child soon learns that loud and long crying is not the key to happiness.

Our children are not *our* servants, but God’s servants. When children help us, they are serving God with us. Just as “the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before

Eli” (1 Samuel 3:1), so our children learn to serve God by our side and under our direction. To effectively teach servanthood, how important it is that Father and Mother understand their role as servants of God!

2. Good parents build lasting relationships. A physical relationship is inherent between parents and children at birth. But physical relationships alone are shallow and short-lived. Lasting relationships are built with enduring spiritual virtues—love and respect for God and others.

True love cannot be contained in thoughts and words; it is expressed in service. Teaching our children to serve is helping them learn how to love their parents and lays the foundation for other good relationships in their lives.

When children are young, Father and Mother determine the quality of the parent-child relationship. But when our children, like Moses, come to years, they will decide whose son or daughter they will be—a child of God or of the world. The foundation of Moses’ choice to identify with Israel rather than Egypt was laid in childhood when Amram and Jochebed taught Moses to be a servant. Pharaoh’s daughter only taught him to be a son. Even after years in Pharaoh’s household, the faith and teaching of Moses’ godly parents remained the strongest influence in his life.

A servanthood mentality builds moral fiber into the character of children. Serving together cements the parent-child relationship and engraves parental teaching and example in their lives. Our success or failure in teaching our children to be servants will determine the strength of our family ties and the endurance of our family faith.

3. *Servanthood precedes sonship.* This basic Bible truth applies in the natural and spiritual family. No person knows God or Christ as Lord until he, like Saul, is ready to bow and say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Think of the younger son in the prodigal parable: He viewed himself only as a privileged son and heir, and it ruined his relationship with the father and separated him from home and godliness. But when he was ready to return and say, "Father, make me a servant," the relationship was restored—Father gladly received him and called him "my son" (see Luke 15:11-24).

Our children and youth will not understand and appreciate the blessing of godliness and a Christian home until they are ready to serve beside their godly parents at home. Parents with vision teach children to be servants in the natural family long before they can grasp the value of service and sonship in the family of God.

4. *The best time to teach service is in childhood.* When children are young, the desire to help usually surpasses the ability to help. But wise parents harness and encourage this desire, turning it into a lifelong service mentality. Under parental direction, lacking ability soon wanes if the blossoms of desire are not stifled and ruined.

Teaching service in childhood requires parents and children spending time together. Faithful mothers, like Hannah, are keepers at home with the young children, and fill a primary service-teaching role. Much purpose and patience is required. But Mother's work will surely be rewarded. Her children, who have learned to serve, will "arise up, and call her blessed" (Proverbs 31:28).

Providing work and service opportunities for growing children is Father's responsibility. The best teaching occurs when instruction and example are combined as Father and sons work together. This need sometimes calls for Father to adjust his occupational interests, even sacrificing some business opportunities and income to provide work and fathering for

his sons. How sad if fathers in the church today are like David—men after God's own heart—but are rearing Amnons and Absaloms, sons who have never learned the value and discipline of service.

5. *Teaching children to serve is a delicate matter.* Few parental responsibilities call for more concern and carefulness. Loading young shoulders with too much work will discourage children, even provoking them to wrath. Requiring too little allows slothfulness and idleness to grow up beside the virtues of diligence and servanthood. Asking children to outperform parents is demanding too much; thinking our children will never surpass us is expecting too little. Both criticism and commendation are helpful when balanced, but if given carelessly, both will ruin the child. Especially challenging is keeping pace with the rapidly expanding capacities of our growing sons and daughters.

Teaching children to serve is rewarding, but not easy. No lasting lessons are learned quickly. Diligence grows among the disciplines of schedule, order, and routine (Isaiah 28:10). Complaining about difficult tasks or school assignments may not be allowed. We should willingly assist children when help is needed, but never pity them when work tests their ability.

Every Christian parent should expect his children to go beyond parental levels of ability and attainment. But we cannot set our children on the path to excellence in service by pushing them beyond us. As the Scripture commands, we "bring up" our children, lifting and leading them upward to stand beside us as equals in Christian service. Then, like Paul, we confess to them that we have not yet attained, and inspire them onward by pointing to higher goals of service and sacrifice in the great cause of Christ's kingdom.

Bringing up sons and daughters as servants prepares our children for a lifetime of service and an eternity of honor. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26). ■

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Sermon of the Month



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

Love and the New Birth

by David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:7, 8).

It is very clear that this question of love is of vital importance, and John constantly emphasizes it. It is in connection with this that he says some of the most glorious and elevating things that can be found in the whole of Scripture. We have, for example, the great statement “God is love”; but it is the whole question of *brotherly* love that led him to say it. It was as he thought about this that he arrived at that great statement.

This, then, I would suggest, is indeed one of the things that is emphasized more than anything else in the whole of the New Testament. Our blessed Lord Himself at the very end of His ministry kept on repeating this same thing—“Love one another.” He constantly told them that the world would be against them and that they would have tribulation. “But,” He kept on saying, “you love one another, and that is how the world will know that you are My disciples. This is the way in which you can demonstrate more clearly than anything else that you are My true followers and that you are children of God.” You will find this standing out in a

most exceptional way if you read John 13–17:1. But it is indeed a great theme running right through the entire New Testament—the Gospels and the Epistles.

I do not hesitate, therefore, to say that the ultimate test of our profession of the Christian faith is, I believe, this whole question of our loving one another. Indeed, I do not hesitate to aver¹ that it is a more vital test than our orthodoxy.² I am the last man in the world to say anything against orthodoxy, but I am here to say that it is *not* the final test. Orthodoxy is *essential*. This epistle [shows] that repeatedly. . . . We *must* believe the right things. Apart from that, we have nothing at all; and we have no standing whatsoever. So the correctness of belief is essential. And yet I say that when we come to the realm of experience and self-examination, the test of orthodoxy is not the ultimate test.

Alas, let us admit it: It is possible for a person to be correct and yet not to be a Christian. It is possible for men and women . . . to be interested in theology and to say that one theology is superior to

1. **aver** – assert as a fact.

2. **orthodoxy** – literally, “right belief”; orthodoxy generally means the body of doctrines that are essential to the Christian faith; this implies consistency in belief and worship with the revelation of Holy Scripture.

another and to accept and defend and argue about it, and yet to be utterly devoid of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the love of God in their hearts. It is a terrible thought, it is a terrible possibility, but it is a fact. There have been men, also, who have clearly been perfectly orthodox—champions of the faith, and yet they have denied that very faith in the bitterness with which they have sometimes defended it. I repeat, *the test of orthodoxy, while it is so vital and essential, is not enough.*

There is something, as John shows us in these two verses without going any further, that goes very much more deeply and is a more certain guarantee of where we really are. I suggest that it is even a more thorough test than the exercise of faith as a principle. I need not emphasize that. Paul has done this once and forever in 1 Corinthians 13 (here paraphrased): “Though I have faith that I can remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I have knowledge and understanding and wisdom, if it is without love, it is no good; it is like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal—no use at all.” Faith is a most glorious and valuable thing, and yet there is something deeper than that. Indeed, there is a more thoroughgoing test, and it is this test of *brotherly love*—love for one another.

Likewise, this is a more thorough test than conduct and behavior. John has a great deal to say about that. Conduct, behavior, and deportment³ are of the most vital importance. “Be not deceived,” says Paul, “God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). And remember what he tells the Corinthians: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). Conduct is essential and important. Yet the fact that men and

women live good, moral, and highly ethical lives does not prove that they are Christians. *The ultimate test of our whole position is this question of love.* Do we possess the love of which the apostle is here speaking?

So let us approach it more directly: What is this love? Well, it is generally agreed that it has reference to Christian people. John is not talking about people who are not Christians. He is here emphasizing this one thing to those who claim to be Christians, to those within the faith. And this evidently is an exhortation that is necessary. What does he mean when he exhorts and pleads with us to “love one another”? I cannot think of a better way of putting it than simply to say that we are to be manifesting in our lives with one another, and in our attitude towards one another, everything that we read about love in 1 Corinthians 13. We are not to be puffed up; we are not to be easily provoked; we are not to think evil; we are not to rejoice in evil about others; we are to hope for all things and to hope for the best in other people.

I am afraid that as we read those words together, we all feel condemned. Loving one another is to love like that, and not only those whom we happen to like, but even those whom we dislike. *That* is the test of the Christian. You remember how our Lord put it in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?” (Matt. 5:46). That is not difficult—anybody can do that—natural love does that. But the whole test of the Christian is to love the difficult person and to manifest 1 Corinthians 13 with the trying person.

“But I thought you said,” says someone, “that this is only applicable to Christian brethren?” Yes, it is. But, alas, we all know that though we are Christians we are not perfect. There are things about all of us that irritate others. God, forgive us for it. There are things that should not belong to us, but they are there, and this calls for patience in others. It calls for sympathy. It calls for understanding. That is what John is

3. **deportment** – the way a person behaves towards other people.

pleading for at this point. He is asking these people to do all they can to help one another, to bear with one another, not to be antagonistic,⁴ not to become irritated. If you see your brother at fault, be patient with him, pray for him, try to help him, be sorry for him, instead of feeling it is something that is hurting you. See it as something that is hurting *him* terribly and doing *him* great harm and robbing *him* of so much joy in his Christian life.

That is what love means—that you somehow detach yourself from the problem and do not think of it in terms of that which is hurting *you*, but look upon it as Christ did; and have compassion for that person, take hold of him, love him out of it. . . . Now John not only puts this as an appeal, he lifts it to a higher level. He goes further than that, and he puts it in such a way that it becomes something very solemn: it becomes a warning. That, again, is something that is so typical and characteristic of the New Testament method of teaching holiness. It does not consist of a mere denunciation of sins or the doing of certain little things. It is so easy to stand and condemn people who do certain things; but that is not the teaching of holiness. *This* is holiness—loving one another—and this is to be seen in terms of our whole relationship to God. It is a great doctrinal matter, and the New Testament always puts the teaching about holiness in terms of ultimate doctrine. Let us see how John does this here.

He does it in a very characteristic way. John, as we have had occasion to see in our study of this epistle, had an interesting type of mind. There was a great deal of the poet and the mystic in him. His method is not logical like that of Paul. As someone has said, John thinks in circles: he generally starts on a practical point, then he philosophizes about it in a Christian way, and then he arrives at some glorious statement of doctrine. This is a perfect illustration of his method.

In my opinion, John ends with what Paul

would have said at the start. John says, “Beloved, let us love one another. . . . Every one that loveth is born of God.” Then comes the negative that he is so fond of: “He that loveth not, knoweth not God,” and then he says, “for God is love.” Now that is the poet’s way of arriving at truth, but I think it will perhaps be more helpful to us, especially those of us who are not poetic and those of us who are more logically minded, if we put it the other way round. The fundamental statement is “God is love.” Because God is love, certain things must be true of us. That is the logical approach.

So, let us start like this; and more than ever do I feel my utter and complete inadequacy as I try to handle words like these. Indeed, who is sufficient for these things? What right has a pygmy man to make such statements as these? And yet it is true—“God is love.” No one can answer that. One trembles even to handle it. It cannot be analyzed. I simply want to point out that John does not say merely that God loves us or that God is loving. He goes beyond that. He says, “‘God is love.’ God essentially is love; God’s nature is love. You cannot think of God without love” . . . “Therefore, because that is the fundamental postulate,⁵ because that is so true of God,” John is saying, “that works itself out for us like this: Because God is love, we ought to love one another, for [these] reasons.”

The first is that “love is of God.” In other words, love is *from* God, love flows from God. It is as if John were turning to these people and saying, “You know, we ought to love one another. We ought more and more to clutch at the great privilege we have of being like God. God loves, and this love I am talking about,” says John, “is something that only comes from God—it is derived from Him.”

John is not talking about natural love at all—let us get rid of that idea. The Greek scholars know that this is a word that really belongs to the New Testament. The pagans did not understand it. It was a new

4. **antagonistic** – expressing hostility or opposition.

5. **postulate** – a proposition that is accepted as true in order to provide a basis for logical reasoning.

conception altogether. Indeed, there was a sense in which the Jews themselves did not understand it. It was something new that God gave to the world through Jesus Christ. Our whole idea of love is so debased; it is so carnal. It is the thing you read about in the newspapers or see in the cinema. But that is not the thing that John is speaking about. He is speaking about this love that comes from God, something that God Himself is doing. "Beloved," says John, "love one another. Cannot you see that as you are doing this you are proving that you are of God? You are doing something that God Himself is doing!" How foolish we are not to rise to the great height of our calling! Let us manifest the fact that we have received this from God. That is the first reason for brotherly love.

The second reason for loving one another is that it is the evidence of our new birth. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God." Now that is why I said at the beginning that this is the most thorough test of whether we are true Christians or not. You see, what finally makes us Christians is that we are born again. We are born of God! It is not a certain intellectual proposition. It is not that we are defenders of the faith and so are concerned about being strictly orthodox. It is not that we are highly moral and ethical. It is not that we do a lot of good and are benevolent. The one thing that *makes* us Christians is that we are born of God. We are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4)—nothing less than that, nothing short of that.

"Here is the thing that proves you are born of God," says John in effect; and this works out in two ways. Only those who are born of God can love like this: nobody else can. The natural man cannot exercise this love; it is obvious that he cannot. Look at the life of the world, and you see the breakdown. The natural man cannot love in this sense. The only people who can love as God loves are those who have received the nature of God. It is no use asking the world

to "love one another." It is impossible. They are incapable of doing it. We need the divine nature within us before we can truly love one another. If within the church you have failure on the part of men and women to love one another, what hope is there for the world to do this? It is utterly impossible.

Let me put it like this: According to this argument, and this is the argument of the New Testament everywhere, those who are born of God must love one another—*they cannot help it*. If something of the divine nature is in me, and the divine nature is love—"God is love"—then there must be this principle of love within me. It must be here, it must be manifesting itself. If I am not conscious of this life within me, and if I am not manifesting this life somehow or other, however feebly, *then I am not a Christian*.

As we have said, John does not put this merely as an exhortation. He puts it in such a way that it becomes a desperately serious matter, and I almost tremble as I proclaim this doctrine. There are people who are unloving, unkind, always criticizing, whispering, backbiting, pleased when they hear something against another Christian. Oh, my heart grieves and bleeds for them as I think of them! They are pronouncing and proclaiming that they are not born of God. They are outside the life of God. I repeat, there is no hope for such people unless they repent and turn to Him. They belong to the world; the murderous spirit of Cain is in them. God is love, and if I say I am born of God and the nature of God is in me, then there must be some of this love in me. "Every one that loveth is born of God," and everyone who is born of God loves—the two statements mean the same thing, so that this is proof positive, final evidence, of my new birth and that I am born of God. ■

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What Should I Wear?

Proverbs 7:10; Jeremiah 2:32

by Jeff Farnham

Usually, the question about what to wear to this or that particular occasion is more a matter of style than anything else. The two texts cited above refer to two women in diametrically opposed situations. One is a seductress who has chosen to dress in a way that will promote unholiness and fornication. The other has attired herself beautifully, symbolic of the holiness of marriage.

I. The Spiritual Question:

Is My Clothing Biblically Modest?

Modesty is a spiritual issue. The modesty of spiritual people is never questionable. Only when a person is carnal, worldly, and unspiritual is there a pushing of the “modesty envelope.” Close fellowship with God always produces modesty, chastity, and beauty.

II. The Moral Question:

Is My Clothing Distinctly Masculine or Distinctly Feminine?

This is not a treatment of machismo and feminism, but of Biblical masculinity and Biblical femininity based upon God’s moral code. God divided mankind into male and female. The distinction in their very creation is intentional; therefore, the presentation of that created individual in public and private should maintain those unique qualities of God’s creative purpose.

III. The Attitudinal Question:

Is My Clothing a Testimony for or Against Jesus Christ?

We are with Him or against Him, gathering with Him or scattering abroad. The attitude of the harlot works to destroy,

while the mindset of the bride seeks to build. Clothing is the most visible part of a believer’s testimony to those who pass by, and it ought to be decidedly in favor of the purity and holiness of the Saviour of man’s soul.

IV. The Functional Question:

Is My Clothing Appropriate?

The first question in this vein that should be asked is not about the clothing, but about the activity. Any activity that “demands” a woman to wear masculine clothing or that “requires” a man to wear effeminate clothing is a wrong activity. Men’s and women’s roles and duties may occasionally overlap, but God designed certain things for men only and certain other things for women only. Believers must not be cross-dressers or “cross-functioners.”

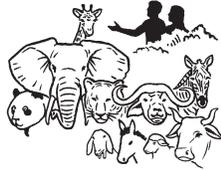
V. The Cultural Question:

Is My Clothing Godly or Weird?

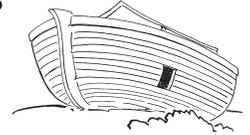
An ever-changing culture where style is in a state of flux demands that what is chic today, we chuck tomorrow. The issue here is whether clothing is godly for Jesus’ sake or weird for the sake of being different. The adulteress wears weird clothing—stark, ghastly, and jarring to both eyes and conscience. She does this to make herself stand out as different for the sake of being different.

Christians ought to be different, but for Jesus’ sake. No believer enhances the cause of Jesus by being purposely weird for weirdness’ sake. ■

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Beginning Issues



Did Ancient Man Have an IQ Problem? Part 3

by John Mullett

In continuing the discussion of the intelligence of ancient man I want to summarize what has been discussed thus far, then continue from where I left off in last month's article. In Part 1, I tried to give an overview of what we should expect to find regarding the intelligence of ancient man from a Biblical perspective of history; then in Part 2 (last month's article), I addressed a number of specific examples of evidence—*Out Of Place Artifacts* or OOPArts—that support the Biblical view: that man was very intelligent right from the beginning. The last example I gave was how the Nazcas (South America) apparently used solar-powered hot-air balloons to bury their dead at sea some two thousand years ago. I want to resume the discussion in this article with some additional examples from the Nazcas along with a few from the Incan and Mayan civilizations

The Nazcas had their version of the zodiac drawn out on the flat surface of the Nazca Desert. The desert floor's composition and conditions, coupled with how it's shielded by the Andes Mountains, ensures that its surface weathers very little and the ancient drawings have been preserved. These drawings have straight lines as long as 5 miles and because of the curvature of the earth it would require an accurate surveying method, yet they are as straight as the best

methods of aerial surveying today could make them. Some of them even lead into a mountain or hill and continue accurately on the opposite side. Many of these designs are also perfectly aligned with astronomical objects. Perhaps the most noteworthy thing about these drawings is the fact they could only be viewed from an aerial view. The flatness of the desert prohibits seeing them or visualizing them any other way. Perhaps they viewed them the same way they buried their dead at sea—by the aforementioned solar-powered hot-air balloons.

The Incas discovered the ruins of the ancient city Tiahuanaco whose builders had long vanished then already. One of the remarkable notes on this city is its location. The city was built at an altitude of 12,500 feet and by all appearances required significant effort to build, but at that altitude it seems impossible. Airplane pilots flying at that altitude for anything more than short periods of time are required to wear oxygen masks. Yet it is clear the city was built there. In another example a wall near the ancient city of Sacahuaman, near the Incan capital, was constructed of huge stones weighing as much as 100 tons, with almost every one of them having its own shape; yet they were cut and fitted so tight that even today it is still not possible to slide a piece of paper between them. One stone in particular

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makes all the others seem small as it weighs in at an estimated 20,000 tons and looms about the size of a five-story house. The largest crane in use today can only lift about 3,000 tons and we have yet to discover how to even so much as budge something that heavy, much less move it any distance; but the builders of Sacsahuaman could and did move that stone.

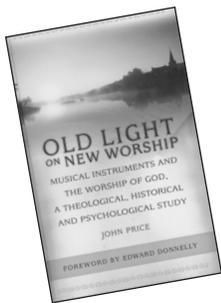
The Mayans are renowned for their accuracy in measuring time. Their calendar was, and still is, more accurate than the Gregorian calendar which we use today. They had calculated the solar year to within .0002 of a day! The Mayan calendar was calibrated with Creation, with the year zero representing the Creation of the world. It was calculated quite accurately and fits the Biblical timescale. It only varies by about 56 years from James Ussher's famous chronology which puts Creation at 4004 B.C.

One more fascinating OOPArt found in

Columbia, South America, is a gold object currently (1998) displayed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. It is estimated to be about 1,000 years old and described as a "stylized insect," but if it weren't for its age one glance would be sufficient to declare it a model of an airplane. There are many additional artifacts and archeological finds such as those discussed in these last two articles that indicate clearly that ancient man was very intelligent and frequently enough we have yet to match their feats. The history of man and his progression (or lack thereof) does not play out in the manner one would expect if evolution were true. ■

PLEASE NOTE: Most of the data and information for these articles is taken from *The Puzzle Of Ancient Man—Advanced Technology in Past Civilizations?* by Donald E. Chittick. I encourage you to read his book for a more complete reading on this subject. Additional information is available at www.answeringenesis.org.

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Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

“... singing with understanding!”

“We Plow the Fields, and Scatter”



Lyrics: “We Plow the Fields, and Scatter” is a classic hymn for the Harvest/Thanksgiving season, dating back to 18th-century Germany. It was written in 1782 by Mathias Claudius as part of a dramatic work describing a peasant celebration of the harvest in northern Germany. The characters in Claudius’ narrative sing this hymn as part of their celebration. In 1861, translator Jane Montgomery Campbell selected these three stanzas from the original German hymn and fashioned them into the hymn that we know today.

Mathias Claudius lived a very colorful life and wore many hats throughout his career. He worked as a newspaper editor, bank auditor, and also as a “Commissioner of Agriculture and Manufactures.”¹ Early in his life, he began by studying theology, but eventually became disillusioned with Christianity and followed some of the “free-thinkers” of his day. After a serious illness in his late thirties, he realized his need of God and recommitted his life to Christ. From then on, his literary works reflected his faith and dependence on God.

The text of this hymn speaks fairly broadly of the Thanksgiving season, but gives special emphasis to the blessings of a physical nature, referencing particularly food and seasons of the year, but

also creation in a more general way. While this hymn is a very appropriate expression of thanks, it should not be the only hymn sung at a Thanksgiving service. It is very important to thank God for the physical blessings we enjoy, but we must also remember to thank Him “for all His love,” the greatest aspect of which is the good news of the Gospel.

Music: The music for this hymn is also of German origin, and was composed by Johann A. P. Schultze. Schultze lived from 1747-1800, and served in various musical capacities throughout his life. He seemed to get along well with royalty, and served as an accompanist for a Polish princess, as well as the *hofkappellmeister* (head court musician) in Rheinsburg, Germany and Copenhagen, Denmark.²

One of the striking features of this hymn tune is the unison phrase that opens the hymn, and reappears in an altered form at the close of the verse. This strengthens the tune in two ways: 1) it provides for a stronger opening with less potential uncertainty and 2) it helps to close the verse conclusively by quoting the opening line with a closing cadence. ■

1. wordwisehymns.com

2. cyberhymnal.org

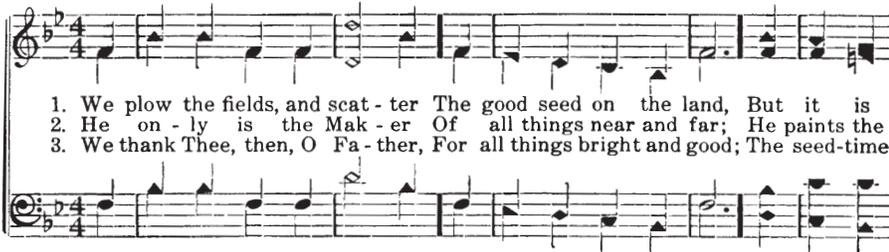
We Plow the Fields, and Scatter

"The eyes of all wait upon thee, O LORD: and thou givest them their meat in due season." —PSALM 145:15

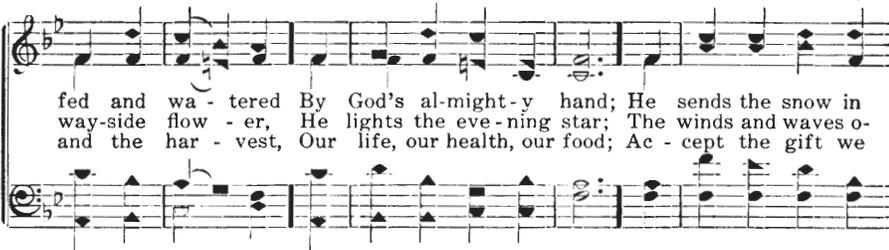
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MATTHIAS CLAUDIUS, 1782

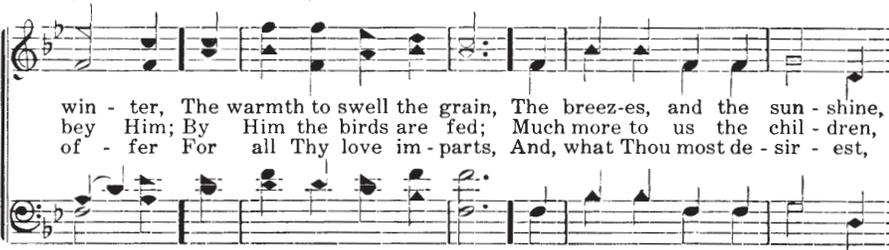
JOHANN A. P. SCHULZE



1. We plow the fields, and scat - ter The good seed on the land, But it is
2. He on - ly is the Mak - er Of all things near and far; He paints the
3. We thank Thee, then, O Fa - ther, For all things bright and good; The seed-time

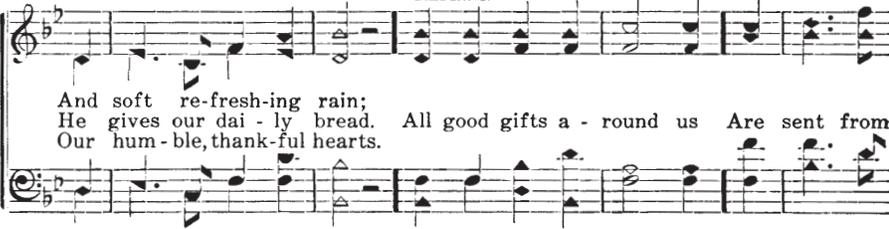


fed and wa - tered By God's al-might-y hand; He sends the snow in
way-side flow - er, He lights the eve - ning star; The winds and waves o -
and the har - vest, Our life, our health, our food; Ac - cept the gift we

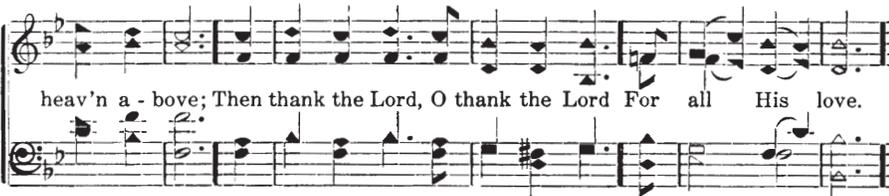


win - ter, The warmth to swell the grain, The breez-es, and the sun - shine,
bey Him; By Him the birds are fed; Much more to us the chil - dren,
of - fer For all Thy love im - parts, And, what Thou most de - sir - est,

REFRAIN



And soft re-fresh-ing rain;
He gives our dai - ly bread. All good gifts a - round us Are sent from
Our hum - ble, thank - ful hearts.



heav'n a - bove; Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord For all His love.



Counseling From the Word

Christian Accountability Forced? or Biblical Brotherhood?

by Verlon Miller

Some time ago I encountered the perspective that planned or intentional accountability within the local church was a “forced accountability” inappropriate to true Christian brotherhood. This perspective gave cause to consider the truth regarding accountability, particularly in light of the ease and tendency to drift away from Biblical truth. The thoughts that follow are applicable to any church, but especially to conservative Anabaptist churches in the decadent culture of the U. S. I fear many so-called Christians have been inoculated against true Christianity by the lukewarmness, wealth, independence, and self-focused spirit fostered by our culture. Sadly, those harmful (if not damning) tendencies can be found in our churches as well. Because I believe this to be true, I see accountability to a local Bible-believing church structure to be of utmost importance. Consider with me the facts about true Christian accountability.

Accountability is positive. While I acknowledge that accountability can be a tool used to wrongfully harm and control others, I believe that a spirit of loving Christian accountability is a good, proper, and needful component of vibrant church life. The fact that accountability can be misused is not grounds to put it on the shelf and use it only in the case of a most blatant sin. We don't stop using hammers for construction just because they can be very effectively

used to destroy, maim, or kill. We continue to use them as a positive tool in the building process. Proper accountability will be positive unless the following five characteristics and attitudes are present.

1) *Blinding Pride*

Pride can blind me to the point of thinking that I usually (or always) know better than my brother. We naturally think that our viewpoint is right but it is pride that will keep us from recognizing that we may be wrong, or at the very least, bettered by considering a brother's point of view. In the Old Testament, the Israelites slid into a terrible spiritual decay when each man “did what was right in his own eyes.”

2) *Self-Focused Independence*

A self-focused independence will keep me from wanting input from anyone else. Some personalities enjoy a more independent nature and this is not wrong. However, I do not believe the Christian life was intended to be lived in independent isolation from other believers. Jesus taught that the level of brotherly love is our testimony to the world around us. This is why a submissive spirit is commanded to Christians. Self-sacrificing, submissive love is an integral part of the Christian's life and can only be developed by the indwelling Holy Spirit. A submissive spirit is a reflection of a believer under the lordship of Christ.

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3) A *Rebellious Spirit*

Rebellion may be a component of some of the surrounding thoughts but bears a specific mention because of the seriousness of this sinful attitude. God views rebellion as “the sin of witchcraft” because it goes directly against the authority structure of the One True God. The heart of rebellion wants to do things “my way” and does not like to regard the directions, beliefs, or opinions of the authorities to which he is subject. It is quite likely one of the root heart issues of those who oppose accountability. This certainly is true in the brotherhood of believers. God has established the authority of the church and those who rebel against the church are in reality rebelling against God. A heart that willingly submits to the lordship of Christ and the authority of His bride, the church, is one that can experience spiritual growth and blessing. Just as a soft heart will, by its very nature, contribute to building the kingdom of God, so a rebellious heart will be party to the devil’s plan to destroy and kill as much of the church as possible.

4) *Selfish, Carnal Desires and Beliefs*

At times we want something so badly, or are so deceived in our thinking, that we are blinded to truth. Those who find themselves in such a state are unwilling to accept input or correction from others. They may think that they are standing strong for what they believe is right, when in reality they are standing strong for something wrong. If I find it hard to accept the thoughts of my brothers, I need to check my spirit and ask the Lord if it is carnality, deception, or a holy steadfastness that is rising within me. The fact that these are difficult to distinguish at times, is evidence that I must strive to live with a heart that is sensitive to the things of the Lord, and is willing to learn from others.

5) *Something to Hide*

Sin does not like to be exposed and so our wrongs make accountability uncomfortable for us when we have sin in our lives. Here again, just because it’s uncomfortable doesn’t mean it’s inappropriate. In reality, accounta-

bility is a spiritual lifesaver. If I care about the tendencies of my wicked heart to hide areas of spiritual darkness, then I must view proper Christian accountability in a positive light . . . a very positive light! It’s one way my Christian brothers and sisters can help keep me on the straight and narrow path to Glory. That is where I want to be. In fact, good accountability can keep me, not only from sin, but also from immature attitudes and actions that are spiritually unhealthy. When all members of the church respond properly to advice or correction, the end result is a brotherhood with purity in spirit, the pure bride of Christ.

While these five areas may not be all inclusive, they generally cover the areas that falsely attempt to make a Biblical positive into a negative.

Accountability is voluntary. Members choose to become a part of the church. They are not coerced and threatened into joining the church. Therefore, they have voluntarily committed themselves to a body of believers and the set of standards by which they live. These may either be written or simply expected. They may be more detailed or quite general. In any case, joining the church body includes commitment to the level of application set by the church. A structured accountability by either a set of specific questions or in a specific circumstance does not necessarily entail that it is a “forced” accountability. If the “accountability” goes beyond the expected standards of the church, then you do enter the realm of personal opinion and the opportunity for unbiblical strife. However, if the accountability concerns matters within the church’s expectations, the accountability has already been agreed to and is not forced, but voluntary.

Since accountability does not happen very easily for most of us, a structured, healthy environment that asks needful and direct questions can actually be a very good thing. I think it is easier for those on both sides of the questioning process when everyone involved knows ahead of time what questions are going to be asked. This may take some of us out of our comfort zones,

but I believe it can be very comforting to be surrounded by a brotherhood that cares enough about me to ask hard questions. Of course, if an individual does not want to be accountable to brothers in the church, that is a choice of his own volition, but it reflects a problem area in the heart.

Accountability is needful for a unified brotherhood. We are commanded to grow in unity with the brothers and sisters around us. A group of believers who do not practice healthy Christian accountability likely reflect the character of a secular “club” more than a brotherhood of Christians. If we can not, do not, or will not get close enough to each other in our local fellowships to know what is happening in each other’s hearts and lives, then we probably do not have unity. At best we will have uniformity on the external evidences of a similar faith and practice. Unity happens at a heart level. It is the combined absence of walls between individuals and a presence of the Spirit of God at work in an individual’s heart. When we refuse to have open spirits toward each other, it is impossible to feel unified even if external beliefs would appear to be the same. Christian accountability is one way of promoting this closeness with our brothers at a much deeper level than many of us have experienced in church life. It is the way of opening our hearts to each other and promoting hearts that press on toward the heart of God. Accountability really is a heart issue. Our attitude toward it determines the depth of relationship within our brotherhood.

Accountability is necessary for meaningful church standards. Sadly, it seems that most churches have members whose tendency is to push the line of church standards no matter where the line is drawn. If the parameters for faith and practice set by the church are not enforced, history shows that it is only a matter of time before the standard is changed or dismissed altogether. This is true of both doctrinal and “practical” issues. The guidelines for faith and practice in our church were developed and approved by the brotherhood, not just

the leadership team. Holding to those standards must come from the entire brotherhood if the standards are to be meaningful. Pastoral leadership is charged with leading out in church discipline in cases of unrepentance, but accountability is a function of the brotherhood and should not only be “from the top down.” When church leaders are the primary ones holding others accountable, you have a top-heavy and unbiblical situation in the church. We must follow the Biblical method of exhortation and correction, which begins with discussion on a personal level among the individuals involved, not necessarily the pastoral team. It is imperative that accountability occurs if the expectations of the church are to be upheld. Of course, it would be much easier for all church members if line-pushers were nonexistent, and all members would demonstrate a greater love for the Lord than the things of the world and flesh. Since that is not always reality, we must accept the responsibility to make accountability a part of the church life. I thank God for the many faithful church members who truly are pillars in the church. May we all grow together to provide that supportive strength for the fellowships of which we are a part.

It is my passion and prayer that our local churches either remain or become strongholds of God’s character—churches displaying the love of Christ to all, but firmly grounded in the eternal truth of God’s Word. Too many individuals and churches no longer reflect these qualities. They have chosen to live for self and reject serious accountability to the whole counsel of God. I believe Christian accountability is one of the pillars of strong faith in a spiritually weak culture. We do live in a perilous time and must live accordingly. We must approach the Christian life with a serious look to the future. Jesus asked, “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” What is your answer to this probing question? By the grace of God, let us all be among the faithful at the end of time. ■

The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men

by Richard D. Phillips

A friend of mine in his late twenties recently made an interesting observation about adultery. Situations of adultery among couples *older* than he have typically involved the man's unfaithfulness, while situations of adultery among couples *younger* than he have typically involved the woman's unfaithfulness.

When I inquired further, he told me what I somehow expected to hear: the men in these marriages where the woman committed unfaithfulness were not exactly—I'm not sure how else to put it—manly.

Now, perhaps this last connection is beside the point. Adultery is sin and hated by God, whether committed by a man or a woman. The victims of adultery deserve our support, whether men or women. Besides, what does "manly" mean? And doesn't it change from culture to culture? And is "manly" really a good thing? a godly thing? Surely no man deserves to have his wife cheat on him, no matter how "unmanly" he is, even if there is some substance to that word.

Yes, yes, all that's absolutely true. Still, there are often reasons for why sin takes the particular course it does, and those are worth considering. My friend's observations about the difference between an older generation and a younger generation is just one anecdote, but it lines up with something many of us have also observed—a flailing and fraying sense of masculinity among more and more younger men.

Hanna Rosin's much-discussed article in *The Atlantic* called "*The End of Men*" (well summarized by Albert Mohler *here*)

describes how men are losing their place in the contemporary economy, an economy increasingly suited to and ruled by women. Rosin observes, "Dozens of college women I interviewed assumed that they very well might be the ones working while their husbands stayed at home. 'Guys,' one senior remarked to me, 'are the new ball and chain.'"

An accompanying article in the same issue by Pamela Paul called "Are Fathers Necessary" reported that children being raised by two lesbians "have fewer behavioral problems, and show more interest in and try harder at school." The article concludes, "The bad news for Dad is that despite common perception, there's nothing objectively essential about his contribution. The good news is, we've gotten used to him. Let's keep ole Dad around because we like the idea of a dad, but, truth be told, there's nothing essential about dad-ness, or father-ness.

Frankly, it's hard to use the word *manly* without being self-conscious. Are we talking about puffed-out chests on Muscle Beach? Or walking on the street-side of the sidewalk when you're with a "lady"? Or "wearing the pants"?

The question isn't an easy one: What is the man-ness of men? Rosin never attempts an answer, and Paul assumes there isn't one. But what really troubles me is that too many young Christian men have no idea either. I'm not surprised when secular journalists don't get it. But why is it that so many young Christian men don't get it? And why haven't the older men in their lives—such as their

pastors—taught them?

There have been a number of books, conferences, and leaders in the last decade which have attempted to recapture a vision of masculinity. Some are chest-thumping. Some are gentle. Some are adventurous. But none of the answers that I've seen are as well-rounded and solidly Biblical as the picture of masculinity presented by Richard Phillips in his new *The Masculine Mandate*.

Pastor Phillips begins in Genesis 2, where God calls Adam to work and keep the Garden, to name the animals, and to love Eve. The first five chapters then provide a theological foundation of what it means to be a man. In one sentence, the masculine mandate is “to be spiritual men placed in real-world, God-defined relationships, as lords and servants under God, to bear God’s fruit by serving and leading.”

The second half of the book moves to the practical. Phillips considers what it means to be a Biblical man in marriage, in parenting, in work, in friendship, and in the church. Throughout, Phillips grounds his Biblical vision in the gospel. He doesn't say, “Men, be what Adam should have been.” He tells us, “You've been saved by Christ and given His Spirit to be what Adam should have been.”

At the risk of undermining the reader's confidence in my objectivity, I have to admit that I have nothing negative to say about the book. I believe that it provides a compelling, balanced, and pastorally-wise picture of Biblical manhood.

- He captures why a Biblical theology of work—a hot topic these days—should make distinctions between men and women.
- He explains how a father should conceive of his parental role differently than a mother, and what it means to give your heart to your children before asking them to give theirs to you.
- He discusses how a husband should labor to understand his wife before he can lead her well.

- He tells men to befriend one another, not just over beer and football, but like Jonathan did when giving his royal robe to David.

Here are some pastoral plans I have for Phillips' book:

- Read it with a couple of men I'm discipling.
- Request that it be placed on our church's bookstall.
- Recommend that it be added to the four or five books we ask couples to read in our newly-married small groups, which couples join for the first two years of marriage.
- Apply some of his lessons in my own life, particularly his advice to be more deliberate about what kind of time I'm spending with my children (he advises four things: read, pray, work, and play).

I say all this because I genuinely hope other pastors and elders will do the same with the men in their churches. My heart grieves to see so many young men in their twenties stuck in porn, putting off marriage, shuffling with boredom from one job to another, spending all their disposable income on evening and weekend pleasures, exhausting so much mental energy on looking cool, and pursuing forms of spirituality that are light on studying truth and heavy on evaluating their internal emotional states. Then these men get married and have children, which helps a little, but they still lack an overall vision of masculinity and leadership.

If the women are saying “There's nothing objectively essential about Dad's contribution,” who do we have to blame?

I want men to be inspired by what the Bible intends for them. I want them to see that God has given them authority to use as His servants—the authority to author life in everyone around them, like Adam harvesting a fruitful garden in church, work, and home. Take a look at Phillips' book. It provides just that vision. ■

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Editorial comment: While the following article specifically concerns evangelical churches, there are definite applications for the Anabaptist world. Open theism has penetrated conservative Anabaptism and we must be alert.

How to Teach Open Theism at Vacation Bible School

Three Ways the Evangelical Church Could Lose the Doctrine of God

by Russell D. Moore

Will the next generation of evangelicals believe in God? This seems like a ridiculous question. After all, our evangelistic tracts begin by announcing that God loves the sinner, and has a wonderful plan for his life. Our evangelistic programs train us to ask others what they would say to God should He ask them why He should allow them into His Heaven. Our discipleship materials offer to help us in the task of “Experiencing God.” Our theologians have contended against Protestant liberalism for the Bible as the very Word of God.

Some current rumblings in evangelicalism suggest, however, that the above question is not quite as baseless as it may appear. A new and growing cadre of evangelical theologians is suggesting that the traditional view of God comes not from Scripture, but from repackaged Greek philosophy. The God of the Bible, they suggest, does not have exhaustive foreknowledge of the future, because the future does not exist to be known. God does not order all the events of history according to the outworking of His eternal plan, they argue. Such a “meticulous blueprint” model would render God responsible for sin and tragedy. Instead, some propose, God is locked in a cosmic battle with other “gods,” and He loses a battle here and there.¹ These “open theists” propose that God gains new information, changes His mind, and even wishes He had done some things differently. They say the Bible tells them so.

Initially, this debate was restricted to breakout sessions at the Evangelical Theological Society, or to competing paperbacks

from InterVarsity Press. In recent years, however, the controversy over the knowledge and power of God has spilled over into controversy at the annual meetings of some evangelical denominations. Could it be that the local congregation will be the next great battleground over the doctrine of God? If so, will evangelicals be able to preserve Biblical theism in our churches?

The “battle for the Bible,” after all, took many evangelicals by surprise. With Biblical inerrancy once a near-consensus among evangelicals of all confessional traditions, many now lament half-jokingly that it is easier to find a creationist at Berkeley than an inerrantist at Fuller Seminary. Might it be that the future will see an entire wing of evangelical churches teaching that God changes His mind, that He can be wrong about the future, or that He stands practically helpless in the face of gratuitous evil? As evangelicals face the openness of God, there are at least three dangerous temptations, any one of which could imperil Biblical theism in our congregations.

1. Frame the openness of God debate as one of evangelicalism’s intramural discussions.

A recent editorial in *Christianity Today* served as a warning signal to many Biblical theists about parachurch evangelicalism’s openness to open theism. The *CT* editorial laid out the differing viewpoints provided by classical and open theism, along with the strengths and weaknesses of both, before concluding that both sides are responsible

to present their respective cases with tough exegetical arguments. “Now, let’s go do our homework,” the editors urged both sides.²

The editorial might have gone unnoticed. It seemed all too typical of similar admonitions to other competing evangelical theological positions—old earth versus young earth creationism, covenant theology versus dispensationalism, cessationism versus Pentecostalism. This is precisely the problem. Does *Christianity Today* really believe that a doctrine as foundational as the omniscience and omnipotence of God can be treated along the same lines as the issue of whether the Rapture takes place before or after the tribulation?³

Even more recently, *Christianity Today* editorial page chastised the Southern Baptist Convention for, among other things, explicitly affirming the exhaustive foreknowledge of God in its confession of faith, the *Baptist Faith and Message*. “Though openness theism clearly runs counter to historic Christian

The open theists are part of a larger movement seeking to define evangelicalism in terms other than a shared commitment to orthodox theology.

theology, it draws on aspects of the biblical witness that not all mainstream theologians have integrated into their teaching,” the editorial claims. “The ongoing debate gives these teachers a chance to make their theology more fully biblical while remaining true to the tradition.”⁴ This critique left many confessional evangelicals incredulous. After all, *CT* could just as easily have noted that the SBC should not have included the deity of Christ explicitly in its confessional statement, since the debate with the “Jesus Seminar” has a great

deal to teach evangelicals about the humanity of Christ.

The postwar evangelical movement (and with it the early *Christianity Today*) did indeed allow for doctrinal diversity. Evangelical leaders such as Billy Graham, Carl F. H. Henry, E. J. Carnell, and Harold Ockenga were determined to avoid the theological shortsightedness of the older fundamentalism on such issues as millenni-

alism and second-degree separation. Thus, they avoided making premillennialism a doctrinal test of fellowship, though most of them were indeed premillennialists. Likewise, they avoided focusing the movement on such questions as whether Christians should attend movie theaters. Similarly, the evangelical movement began with a commitment to transdenominational united evangelical action. Similarly, they were not going to divide over ecclesiological distinctives such as baptism or church government. Still, the evangelical movement began with a clear consensus on evangelical orthodoxy, including the classical doctrine of God. The knowledge, power, and changelessness of God were affirmed with unanimity in Billy Graham crusades, Fuller Seminary apologetics lectures, and *Christianity Today* editorial pages.

The suggestion that God’s knowledge or power is limited is not unknown to the evangelical tradition. Evangelical theologians such as Carl Henry, Francis Schaeffer, and E. J. Carnell actively engaged very similarly articulated arguments from Boston personalists, process philosophers, and liberation theologians. They did not see these issues as matters of minor significance. Indeed, Henry called such ideas nothing less than the “Baalizing of God.”⁵

The argument has become more complicated in recent years, however, since the “open” view now comes from within. Indeed the underlying subtext of the openness of God discussion is the ongoing debate over evangelical identity. The open theists are part of a larger movement seeking to define evangelicalism in terms other than a shared commitment to orthodox theology. Clark Pinnock, the godfather of open theism, argues that what makes an individual “evangelical” is simply his decision to be one. “The identity of an evangelical theologian is defined more sociologically than precisely theologically,” he argues.⁶ The postwar evangelical movement, however, was inherently theological. It defined itself on the basis of a clearly articulated ideological agenda, set against both the theological

infidelity of Protestant liberalism and the theological reductionism of “five-point” fundamentalism.

In celebrating the “big tent,” open theists such as Pinnock have expressed sadness at traditionalist evangelicals who refer to their position as “heresy.” Clark Pinnock, for example, calls for “peaceful relations” between traditional and open theists, and expresses hurt that theologian R. C. Sproul has called the open model a departure from Christianity.⁷ Roger Olson decries opposition to open theism as a loss of “tolerance with regard to nonessentials of the Christian faith.”⁸ During the controversy over the issue in the Baptist General Conference, Gregory Boyd and his supporters defended his position by appealing to the denomination’s heritage of non-creedal pietism, as opposed to the confessionalism of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Do the open theists really believe that the doctrine of God is a “nonessential” issue that can be debated within the borders of a common evangelical identity? Their rhetoric betrays them here. Pinnock, for example, employs some fiery language of his own by suggesting that the debate will “force evangelicals to make a choice between the God of the Bible and the God of the Greek philosophers.”⁹ If Pinnock believes the debate is about the worship of the true God versus a false god, then how can he ask for “peaceful relations” on this issue?

If acknowledging God’s power and wisdom is essential to worshiping God as He has revealed Himself, then evangelical churches have no room for latitude here. Evangelicals must ask themselves whether evangelicalism means more than living in a subculture long enough to know that “Larry Boy” is a cucumber. There is abundant Biblical evidence that this is dangerous territory. The Israelites learned that naming a god “Yahweh” does not make it the living God (Exodus 32:8). The Old Testament prophets pointed to Yahweh’s exhaustive knowledge of future events to contrast Him with the ignorance of idols that could not speak and could not save

(Isaiah 40–45, for example). Jesus indicted the Sadducees for having an inadequate view of the power of God (Mark 12:24).

More and more open theists are demonstrating that their revisions are not simply a nip and tuck on an otherwise seamless evangelical theology. This battle is about more than omniscience and omnipotence, as if these were not enough. John Sanders, for instance, suggests, “God had thought Saul would be a good king, but in the end he had to turn to David.”¹⁰ What does this do to God’s eternal purpose to set Jesus on the throne of David (Psalm 89; Acts 2)? He also suggests that the cross was not planned from the foundation of the world, but is negotiated between Jesus and the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.¹¹ What does this do to the Old Testament sacrificial system as a pointer to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God? What does it do to the necessity of the shedding of Jesus’ blood for redemption from sin? As noted above, Greg Boyd pushes open theism to a rejection of monotheism itself as he affirms a “multiplicity of gods” able to at times thwart the will of the Creator.¹²

Evangelicals cannot refuse to face these questions. If evangelicals simply dismiss the open theists as quirky brethren with a slightly different view of God, the ramifications for generations to come are breathtaking. One can easily imagine an evangelical pastor before an open casket, reassuring the grieving family members that God was as shocked as they are by the fatal accident of their loved one. One can picture the cancer victim hearing the words of “comfort” that God’s will for her health was overcome by another being, a “god” intent on hurting her. Evangelicals must insist that Biblical theism is indeed an “essential” not only of evangelical orthodoxy, but also for fidelity to the Gospel of Christ.

2. Contrast the open god with “God in general,” not the God and Father of Jesus Christ.

Open theists have consistently complained that the classical vision of God is rehashed Greek philosophy rather than

Biblical revelation.¹³ Clark Pinnock ridicules the “timeless block” of classical theism, warning that “unless the portrait of God is compelling, the credibility of belief in God is bound to decline.”¹⁴

Evangelicals must not be afraid to point out, however, that the open theists are hardly the philosophical virgins they pretend to be. “Sooner or later we will have to join modern experience,” Pinnock writes. “The fact is that we need a resource which can help us put love in the center of theology. Plato cannot help us; maybe Whitehead can.”¹⁵ Despite earlier protests that traditionalists were unfairly tying open theism to the process thought of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, some open theists are now more willing than ever to discuss their dependence on process theology.

The surest way for traditionalists to lose Biblical theism would be to appear to concede to the open theists the Bible’s personal, living God revealed in Jesus Christ.

“Any honest person on either side will acknowledge that we share many convictions and find much to appreciate in the other,” Pinnock writes of process theology. “The fact is that process and openness theists share important convictions.”¹⁶ These commonalities are explored in a book, co-edited by Pinnock and process thinker John Cobb, disturbingly titled *Searching for an Adequate God*.

Evangelical theologians have provided strong refutations to the contention that classical theism is a Greek corruption of Hebrew thought.¹⁷ Indeed, evangelical theology has never held to the static, unblinking God-concept of Greek philosophy. This is precisely because evangelicals believe in the evangel—God so loves the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Against the impersonal “ground of being” of theologians such as Paul Tillich, evangelicals have consistently put forward the Biblical picture of the God who acts, who loves, who answers prayer, and who has spoken in Scripture. Francis Schaeffer, for instance, took on the icy deadness of existential philosophy by proclaiming to the

Vietnam-era youth culture that God is there, and He is not silent.¹⁸ No open theist could show more contempt for the speculative natural theology of the medieval theologians than did Carl Henry, who constantly called attention to the God who stands and speaks and stoops and stays.

The surest way for traditionalists to lose Biblical theism would be to appear to concede to the open theists the Bible’s personal, living God revealed in Jesus Christ. This means traditionalists must take on the arguments of open theists exegetically, verse by verse. Demonstrating the philosophical self-contradictions of open theism is a worthy endeavor, but it must not sidetrack our commitment to the revealed truth about God in Scripture. Theologian Norman Geisler, for instance, seems to fit the caricature of a classical theist steeped in the medieval synthesis. An evangelical Thomist, Geisler builds a philosophical case for an all-knowing, all-powerful, unchanging God from the concept of *dignum deo*, what kind of God is worthy to be worshiped.¹⁹ Instead of turning to Thomas Aquinas’ analogy of being, evangelicals should meet open theists on the pages of Scripture to argue for, again in the words of Schaeffer, the God who is there.

This means that evangelical conservatives are right to speak often, as the Bible does, of the glory of God. But, we must not speak of God’s glory as a bloodless abstraction. God is not Aristotle’s deity, blindly contemplating His own perfection. Nor is He setting history in motion ultimately to glorify Himself merely in the redemption of some individual humans and the damnation of others. Rather, the purposes of God in Creation, providence, and history focus on the glory of God in Christ (Eph. 1:9, 10; 19-23; Phil. 2:11; Col. 1:13-20; Rev. 5:9, 10). We see the glory of God most fully when we understand that He has purposed to glorify Christ Jesus as the first-born of many brothers (Heb. 2:9-18). We see the warmly relational character of God not by rejecting the attributes He has revealed about Himself, but by seeing that He loves His Son above all things, and loves us because we are in Him (John 17:24-26).

Evangelical churches know that they can trust their Bibles to tell them about God. If they (falsely) believe that open theists are the simple Biblicists in this debate, the doctrine of God will be eclipsed. For instance, evangelicals know that Greg Boyd is right when he says that the Bible presents a “warfare worldview.” The Bible does not present evil and sin dispassionately, as simply more steps in the blueprint. Open theists such as Boyd and John Sanders skillfully paint pictures of horrifying examples of evil—a young man killed by a drunk driver, a young girl whose eyes are gouged out by Nazi soldiers in front of her watching mother. Biblical theists must not concede the complete sovereignty of God over such things, but neither must we stop seeing them as enemies of God to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26; Rom. 8:19-23). As Schaeffer noted, “What Jesus did at the tomb of Lazarus sets the world on fire—it becomes a great shout into the morass of the twentieth century.” Jesus’ cry of anger at the abnormality of death means that the Christian “can fight evil without fighting God,” Schaeffer contended.²⁰ If evangelicals are going to preserve a Biblical worldview, we must simultaneously affirm the “warfare worldview” (evil and tragedy are proof that something has gone dreadfully awry) and the “meticulous blueprint worldview” (there is no suffering that is “meaningless”; God will triumph over evil in the end). We must not unwittingly allow classical theism to be tied to an impersonal abstraction of God or to a Stoic resignation in the face of evil. If this happens, not only will the Biblical doctrine of God be endangered, it will already be gone.

3. Present God as a means to the goals of Christian values and congregational mission.

An evangelical publisher recently released a new Bible study curriculum based on The Andy Griffith Show. The new material allows evangelical Sunday school classes and small groups to draw the New Testament meaning from reruns of the television program. Despite the fact that most of the writers for the show were actually Jewish and so did not

intentionally infuse Christian teachings into the episodes, many are enthusiastic about the prospects for Christian education. “Mayberry was a good town with good people,” commented Jim Clark, founder of The Andy Griffith Show Rerun Watchers Club. “It’s easy to find parallels with Christian teaching and the story of Mayberry.”²¹

One will probably not find much about the omniscience or omnipotence of God in The Andy Griffith lessons. One will undoubtedly find little about the coming judgment and God’s provision for redemption in Christ Jesus. But the materials might teach us good old-fashioned values, like the ones they had in Mayberry. After all, isn’t that what Christianity is all about? According to turn-of-the-century Social Gospel Protestant liberals, yes. According to Bible-believing evangelicals, no.

Philosopher Francis Fukuyama suggests that American religion is often less a truth claim about God than a strategy to enforce the values of the community. “Religion is frequently not so much the product of dogmatic belief as it is the provider of a convenient language that allows communities to express moral beliefs that they would hold on entirely secular grounds,” he writes.²² In this Fukuyama is consistent with an entire lineage of Christianity’s cultured despisers. Christians do not really believe that their God-talk is objectively true, they say, but the idea of an all-glorious, all-seeing God of love and judgment keeps the morals and manners of the masses in check.

Many evangelicals would have a hard time proving Fukuyama wrong. Try to find a children’s Sunday school lesson on the conquest of Canaan, the destruction of Sodom, or the sinlessness of Christ. Generations past catechized their children on the entire sweep of the Biblical record, including the attributes of God. A father might teach his daughter, for example, to memorize the answer to the question, “Can God do all things?” Her answer would be, “Yes. God can do all His holy will.”²³ This was because the father believed it was impor-

tant that she understand what God had revealed about Himself. Knowing God was a worthy goal, not simply a means to an end.

Today's Sunday school and Bible study lessons, for adults as well as for children, often seem to use God as a prop for what is seen as the higher pursuit of "Christian values." The story of Jesus' multiplication of the loaves and fishes is taught not primarily as highlighting the identity of Jesus, but as a lesson on sharing. The calling of the twelve apostles is not communicated as Christ sending forth His appointed messengers to the ends of the earth with the Gospel of grace. Rather it is reduced to a moral example, "Jesus had friends."

There is much in Scripture about Christian morality and life in the Spirit. But this behavior is contingent upon the people of God knowing the attributes of their God. Solomon understood that God's command for Israel to reflect righteousness and justice was so "all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else" (1 Kings 8:60). Likewise, the New Testament asserts that the makeup of the church dramatically pictures to the watching world the moral attributes of the God who called the assembly together by His Spirit (1 Peter 2:9-12).

Too often in our preaching and teaching, we fail to communicate to our people the preciousness of knowing the God who has redeemed us in Christ. Instead, we seem to refer to Him in order to move on to the "more important" priorities of seeing our children share their Play-Doh, our teenagers sign their "True Love Waits" cards, and our adults support the building fund.

If we reduce God to a means to these ends, then His sovereignty and wisdom are negotiable after all. If we market the Biblical God merely as the answer to life's questions, then the day may come when the "open god" answers a few questions of his own. The open view might seem psychologically beneficial to the grieving divorcee. "Free-will theism" might seem to answer the questions the visiting college student keeps asking. We might move on to build

the new "Family Life Center" and start the new divorce recovery workshop, but we will no longer believe in God.

Conclusion

There is great reason for optimism in the midst of the openness of God debate. The Southern Baptist Convention has added exhaustive foreknowledge to its confession of faith, without so much as one voice of dissent from the convention floor. Even as the Baptist General Conference failed to adopt a similar plank, it revealed that it has some very capable defenders of classical theism in John Piper, Justin Taylor, and the concerned pastors of the Edgren Fellowship. Evangelical theologians such as Millard Erickson, Wayne Grudem, Bruce Ware, and R. Albert Mohler continue the evangelical tradition of setting forth a compelling Biblical vision of an all-knowing, all-powerful, unchangeable God.

Still, evangelical theology is ultimately not about denominational floor votes or theological arguments. It is about Vacation Bible School. It is about the health of our churches and the heritage we pass on to the next generation. Evangelicals have long had a consensus on the doctrine of the almighty, all-knowing Triune God. Open theism might seem to be a temporary theological fad for evangelicals on their way out the door, and it very well may be. But, it might also be a harbinger of great downgrade in our evangelical churches. Not only must we take it seriously and engage it Biblically. We must also build congregations that are energized by the God-focused words of our risen King: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Endnotes

1. See, for instance, Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997).
2. "God vs. God," *Christianity Today*, 7 February 2000, 34-5.
3. For a critique of the *Christianity Today* editorial, see Thomas R. Schreiner, "Editorial: Sovereignty, Suffering, and Open Theism," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 4 (Summer 2000), 2-4.
4. "Do Good Fences Make Good Baptists?" *Christianity Today*, 7 August 2000, 36.