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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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longer in a large scale as before—they now aim at the shepherd of the flock. Strike the shepherd, and then the sheep scatter. Over the past several years, different attempts have been made on house church pastors, and workers whose groups are becoming too big or have become too influential in their communities.

One pastor I know was met by two "robbers" after a church meeting. They stabbed him in his vital organs—clearly a professional job—and left him bleeding to death. A "Good Samaritan" saw him and took him to a nearby hospital. As the doctor tried to save him, he received a phone call. The doctor immediately stopped his treatments and sent the sick man home. That call was orders from the top.

Another pastor I know was on his way home on his bike after a Sunday service. Suddenly he was knocked down by a car that was following him. After knocking him down, the car turned around and ran over him again, to make sure he was dead and the job was done. Over the past few years, a number of mysterious car accidents have left one dead, one crippled, and one seriously injured. These are only the ones I know. There are many others I do not know about.

I was taken in twice in the past few years. Apparently, the church workers' phones were tapped and the government discovered into what area I was going. On the first occasion I was taken to a room and interrogated for many hours. The questions flew back and forth. They kept me overnight. The second time I was interrogated for eight hours. The Lord is good; He granted me the peace and the words to answer them. I told them things they already knew and things that they could have found out, but by God's help I did not reveal anything else. I also seized opportunities to share my testimony and the Gospel with them. I told them how I came to Christ and about His work in my life. Since they could not find any serious charge to hold me, they let me go with a warning to discontinue my teaching work,

for it is not permitted under Chinese law.

The worker with whom I had been in touch was not let off so easy. He suffered. They tied him down to an armchair and landed blows on him; and a stun gun knocked him unconscious. He would wake up, only to receive more of the same treatment. This continued for twenty-four hours. After that incident, he was called in every week for interrogation. This lasted for months.

Sheep among wolves? Yes. Why? What will become of them? The way of Jesus is different from the way of the world. The principles of His Kingdom operate differently from the kingdom of the world. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:24, 25). Life through death is the principle of the Kingdom. It is the cost of discipleship; it is the path to glory. The church flourishes in persecution.

God is the author of history. As we see in the Book of Daniel, God raised up kingdoms and He brought them down, for one aim and one purpose—to bring in the Messianic Kingdom; to establish the Kingdom of God. Of all the ancient kingdoms mentioned in the Book of Daniel—Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome—they all came and went in history. They were all reduced to nations of little significance. China, established before these nations, remains strong and is growing. Napoleon once said to one of his generals who tried to persuade him to attack China, "China is a sleeping giant. Let her sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world."

God is the author of history and He makes no mistake. He has a purpose for China, especially for the Chinese church. He allowed persecution to come for a good purpose. He seeks to purify the Church so she can be His instrument in these last days. May His will be done. ■

—Reprinted by permission from the *Five Loaves Ministry newsletter*, April 2010.

# Person of the Month:

*Mel Trotter*  
(1870-1940)



*"I was there when it happened, January 19, 1897, 10 minutes past 9, Central time, Pacific Garden Mission, Chicago, Illinois, USA."*—Mel Trotter's response when asked how he knew he was saved.

Following in his father's footsteps, Mel Trotter became a hopeless alcoholic by the age of twenty. Despite his mother's godly example, the influence of his father's saloon and drinking proved to be a temptation too powerful for the young man to overcome in his own strength.

Although Trotter married and had a son, his drinking problem persisted. In spite of his best efforts to stop drinking, he would always fail again miserably and go on another drinking binge. His family often suffered from lack of necessities as a result of his addiction. Trotter once sold his family's horse and buggy to support his obsession. After one ten-day drinking spree, he returned home to find his two-year-old son dead in his mother's arms. Despondent and penniless, he vowed to his wife never to touch another drop of liquor. But, only two hours later, he returned home drunk again.

He left home for Chicago, but his drinking continued. He even sold his shoes in winter to buy liquor. Contemplating suicide, Trotter started walking toward the freezing waters of Lake Michigan, where he intended to plunge in and drown himself. Along his path, he passed the Pacific Garden Rescue Mission where he was pulled inside to hear the meeting that was in progress. Harry Monroe, who was the superintendent of the mission and a converted alcoholic himself, was giving his testimony of conversion and deliverance from alcoholism. At the invitation Trotter went forward and was converted. After gaining complete victory through Christ over his addiction, he chose 2 Corinthians 5:17 as his favorite verse: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." He was indeed a new creature, and he immediately started assisting Monroe in the work of the Chicago mission.

In 1900 Trotter was asked to supervise a new rescue mission established in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This mission would eventually expand to support 750 men. As superintendent for the next 40 years, he saw many great victories, such as having an adjacent saloon close its doors due to lack of business. In conjunction with that work, he also helped to found at least 67 other rescue missions across the nation.

Many desired to hear Trotter's powerful testimony, and it wasn't uncommon for him to be asked to fill in for R. A. Torrey and Billy Sunday during their revival campaigns. Suffering from cancer, Trotter last preached at the Grand Rapids Mission on its 40th anniversary in January 1940.

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# *The Sin and Fall of Adam and Eve*

## Genesis 3:1-24

by Harold Martin

**T**he entire question about why sin has been included in the plan of God for human beings is ultimately something which we cannot answer. The Genesis account tells *how sin entered* the human race, but not *how sin came into being*. Questions about the origin of evil simply cannot be answered. Those answers are wrapped up in the mysteries of God's eternal counsels.

We learn in Genesis 1 and 2 that the first man and the first woman were created as upright beings. At the conclusion of the creation week, we are told that "God saw everything he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).<sup>1</sup> That included the creation of man, but now in Genesis 3 we learn about *the Fall* of Adam and Eve from their state of perfection.

The first man and the first woman lived in a beautiful Garden, and shared a pleasant life in a sterling environment. They were innocent and perfect creatures who were created by a perfect God. There was no taint of sin in the lives of Adam and Eve—but then something happened.

There was a great fall! As a result, men and women today find that it is easier to do wrong than to do right. We have a natural bias toward evil. One of the far-reaching results of Adam's sin is that the human heart "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). The sin of Adam and Eve affects all mankind.

This section is a pivot point of the Bible. If the account in Genesis 3 is only a story-

teller's tale, and is not true, the rest of the Scriptures are meaningless.

Because Adam was our representative, sin entered the entire human race—and so all are "*under sin*" (Galatians 3:22)—which means that *every human being is under sin's grip*. We have inherited a sin nature. The disposition to do wrong lies deep in each individual's life. One tragic result of Adam's sin is the fact that every human being has been born with possibilities for evil engraved in his nature.

The Bible does not teach that men and women began at the bottom (as savages), and slowly but surely climbed upwards. Rather, the message of the Bible is that mankind started at the top and fell to the bottom. Like Humpty-Dumpty, there has been a great fall.

Adam and Eve *were given a test*. It started with one single prohibition. There was a certain tree in the center of the Garden of Eden, of which Adam and Eve were not to eat. But upon the suggestion of the serpent, they rebelled against God's clear instruction and chose to disobey His command. The Bible record of the Fall of Adam and Eve is the only adequate and reasonable explanation for the present condition of the human race.

The Bible account of the "Fall" explains the tendencies toward doing wrong, even in the natures of little children. It also accounts for the presence of evil in the world that has been made by a perfect Creator. The account in Genesis 3 does not fill

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1. When God looked at His creation—from the biggest star He had made, to the tiniest blade of grass—it brought joy to His heart. God said of the creation, "Behold it [is] very good" (Genesis 1:31).

in every detail, but the major truth about the Fall is altogether clear.

### 1. THE TEMPTATION AND FALL INTO SIN (3:1-7)

When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in the Garden and He instructed them to “dress and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). That was followed by a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for in the day they would eat fruit from that tree, they would “surely die” (2:16, 17). God had given a command, and it was enough to test their obedience to Him.

The Bible says that *the serpent* was the instrument of the temptation. The real tempter is identified as *Satan* in Revelation 12:9. It was *the devil* who deceived the world. The devil is the enemy of God, and it was Satan who questioned God’s right to place a prohibition upon Adam and Eve. Satan stated the exact opposite of what God had said to the woman. He said, “Ye shall *not* surely die” (3:4).

Adam surely shared with Eve the command which God had given him (before Eve was created) about the trees in the Garden (2:16, 17). Apparently Eve felt that for all practical purposes, God had given them everything—and the one single restriction was very trivial (3:2, 3). She said, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden” (3:2b), but the fruit of one tree, we are not to touch or to eat.

Eve seemed satisfied with the restriction, but Satan implied *that if* God is a good God, He would not withhold anything from them. Satan’s major premise was, *Restrictions are not good, and since God’s plan is restrictive, His plan is not good.* That argument marks the difference between the “broad” road and the “narrow” road which Jesus talked about in Matthew 7:13, 14.

Adam and Eve decided that God was wrong and that the serpent was right. They made a willful and deliberate decision to *defy* God’s authority, and determined to decide themselves what was good

and what was evil, instead of listening obediently to the voice of God.

Satan assured Eve that she would *not* die if she ate of the forbidden fruit, but that she would have new knowledge. The woman believed Satan rather than God. She examined the forbidden fruit, partook of it, and gave some to her husband (3:6b)—but the sin of Adam and Eve was *more than* merely eating the forbidden fruit. It was disobeying the revealed word of God. It was believing the lie of Satan. It was placing their own will above God’s will. And as a result, there were some severe penalties.

But someone will say, *Why did God allow man to be tempted? Why didn’t He create Adam so that he could not have done wrong?* The answer most likely is this: God could have created Adam *without* the capacity for sinning—but then Adam would *not have had* a free will; he would have been a mere machine. God was not desirous of having His creatures love Him and obey Him because they were *forced* to love Him, or because there was *no other alternative*. He wanted them to act as they did because they wanted to! So God created man with the potential for evil *and* for good, and gave humans the power to choose whichever they wished. Adam and Eve chose to do evil.

When Adam and Eve made the wrong choice, they deliberately acted against better knowledge and decided to defy God’s Word, and as a result of the great tragedy, mankind fell from the created state of innocence and fellowship with God—to the present state of alienation from God.

### 2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE (3:8-21)

Adam and Eve committed one simple act of transgression against God; it had far-reaching consequences. The results of Adam’s sin included both *judgment and grace*. There was shame and fear and estrangement from God, but already (in 3:15) there was the promise of a Saviour.

### **a. Conviction and confession (3:8-13)**

God brought immediate punishment because of the sin of Adam and Eve. Verses 8-13 describe the shame and fear and estrangement from God which Adam and Eve experienced as soon as they had sinned (3:7).

God asked several questions very soon after they had sinned—verses 9, 11, and 13. The questions were asked not to *gain information*, but to *compel confession*. Both Adam and Eve confessed their sin when they said, “and I did eat” (vv. 12, 13)—but they tried to evade *responsibility* for their actions by blaming others. Adam even insinuated that *God* was partly responsible, but blaming others did not prevent the couple from receiving the consequences.

Terror and dread now paralyzed Adam and Eve, even though the Lord did not approach them with harshness. He was seeking through tenderness to elicit a favorable response—but Adam and Eve began to offer excuses, and tried to pass the responsibility on to another. When the Lord confronted them, Adam blamed *God—and Eve!* He answered, “The *woman* whom *thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree” (3:12). And Eve blamed *the serpent!* She said, “The *serpent* beguiled me, and I did eat” (3:13). Each basically said, “It’s not *my* fault.” Fallen human nature tries to weasel out of difficulties by blaming others, even blaming God, as Adam did: “the woman whom thou gavest to . . . me” (3:12).

The section which follows describes the penalties which God pronounced upon the individual parties that were involved in the Fall.

### **b. Condemnation and judgment (3:14-21)**

The *judgment upon the serpent* was that he should crawl in the dust and even feed on it. He would move from place to place by slithering his way on the ground, and would be hated by humans. The serpent may not have been crawling on his

belly when he approached Eve in the Garden, but now he would be a loathsome reptile (3:14).

The words, “*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman*” (3:15), declare that the time will come when the “Seed” of a woman (3:15), shall bruise Satan’s head. The words of verse 15 were spoken to Satan. God said that an individual from among the woman’s Seed will deal a deathblow to Satan—and even though the devil seems to be doing his worst as the current age of grace moves on, one day the Seed of the woman will crush him, and Satan’s doom will surely come. Jesus will bruise Satan’s *head* (a deathblow); Satan shall bruise Jesus’ *heel* (cause suffering). So, way back in Genesis 3:15, God told of the time when Jesus (the *Seed* of the woman) would crush Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit (Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:10).

The *judgment upon the woman* was a declaration that now there was to be submission to her husband’s leadership, that conception would be multiplied, and that there would be increased pain in child-bearing (3:16). Some Bible students believe that the clause “Thy desire shall be to thy husband,” speaks of the woman’s natural desire to bear children and thus fulfill her maternal instinct.

The *judgment upon the man* was that now he would be doomed to physical hardship, to toil and labor by the sweat of his brow, and to struggle against thorns and thistles all the days of his life. Work would involve difficult toil, and there would be disappointing vexations. Adam’s pleasant work in the garden had now become toil, and would be done by the sweat of the brow. Weariness would become his daily experience (3:17-19).

There was also a *curse upon the earth itself*. God said, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake” (verse 17b). Formerly the earth had yielded its produce abundantly and freely, but now, as a result of the curse, one can find great stretches of wasteland on every continent of earth. And there are

typhoons and tornadoes, blizzards and volcanoes, terrible deserts and savage beasts. There is a corruption in all nature. All things (living and nonliving) tend to wear out, run down, and grow old. Food spoils and decays. Automobiles wear out. Gardens produce weeds. The whole creation is travailing in pain, waiting for the deliverance that will come when Jesus returns (Romans 8:21, 22).

The text states that Eve was the mother of each person (and of each clan of people) on earth (3:20). Verse 21 explains that God made coverings of animal skins to replace the inadequate “fig leaves” (3:7) which did not fully provide concealment of the nakedness which Adam and Eve sensed after they had sinned.

The consequences listed in 3:14-19 are the immediate results of Adam’s sin, but in addition to these, the New Testament writers explain that there have been *far-reaching results*. Since Adam sinned, each human being has become involved in his transgression. Romans 5:12 explains that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin . . . *death passed upon all men.*”

As a result of Adam’s sin (because he was our representative), sin entered the entire human race—and so all are “*under sin*” (Galatians 3:22)—that is, *every human being is under sin’s grip*. We have inherited a sin nature. The disposition to do wrong lies deep in each individual’s life. One of the tragic results of Adam’s sin is the fact that the entire human race became depraved<sup>2</sup> and corrupt.

The Fall of man explains why the

human heart has a bent toward sinning. The *New England Primer* says it well: “In Adam’s fall, we sinned all.”<sup>3</sup>

Every human being in his natural state, since the time of the Fall in Genesis 3, is a sinful, selfish, fallen creature, who stands in need of a complete transformation. This is not the popular view of human nature, but it is the Biblical view.<sup>4</sup> We like to cherish the idea that while we are not perfect, at least we are good at heart. That is not true.

### 3. THE EXPULSION FROM THE GARDEN (3:22-24)

There was some truth in Satan’s lie to Eve, when he said to her that she would become like God (3:5). When Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden, some angelic beings were stationed at the gate to prevent man from eating of the tree of life (3:22, 24). If Adam and Eve would have partaken of the tree of life, now that they had sinned in defying God’s clear command, they would have lived forever in their sinful state. It would have involved living *unendingly* in bodies subject to sickness and infirmity.

The expulsion from the Garden of Eden had a twofold purpose. It was both a *punishment* and an *act of mercy*. God, in an act of mercy, barred Adam and Eve from the Garden, now that they had rebelled and sinned against God—so that they might not *take also of the tree of life* and live forever in their sinful state.

The Lord, with loving concern, kept Adam and Eve away from eating fruit that would make them immortal (2:23),

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2. Depravity does not mean that man is in a state where he never does anything good at all. Occasionally we find traces of the divine image, but it is always marred. Depravity does not mean that every sinner lives as wickedly as he possibly can, and that unsaved people cannot perform deeds of kindness—but it does mean that corruption has entered every faculty of man’s being. Most people have some nice qualities, but underneath the surface each one has the potential for evil. In one moment a man can do a noble deed; in the next moment he can become almost like a beast.

3. New Age advocates teach that people must remember the presence and potential of *the divine nature* that is within them, and so they view Christianity as a pernicious influence because its message teaches universal sin.

4. Sometimes people ask why the Fall of man should hang on such an insignificant matter as eating a little fruit from a tree. Actually, the sin was not in the eating of the fruit, but in the disobedience and the rebellion prior to that act. Christians receive a new nature and then use spiritual disciplines to *stimulate* the growth of the new nature, and to *depress* the pull of the old nature.

and thus have had them live forever in the sad condition to which sin had brought them.

It is in Genesis 3 that we learn about what is commonly called “the original sin.” The teaching about the “original sin”<sup>5</sup> is not a description of a quaint story about a garden with an apple. It is an explanation of what is wrong with all of us. It is an attempt to answer the question—“From where comes all this evil, in us, and around us?”

In the New Testament the Apostle Paul speaks about the sin of the first man, Adam, and then says that “by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Romans 5:18)—and declares that “both Jews and Gentiles . . . are all under sin” (Romans 3:9). The verse does not say that all people *commit* sins, nor does it say that all people *are* sinners (even though we are)—but the text clearly says that all are “under sin.” That is, every human being has inherited *the sin nature* from Adam (Romans 5:12), and thus each man, woman, and child down through the years has been a prisoner of sin. Adam’s sin *has predisposed every descendant of his* to be infected with a sin nature. We are programmed to do wrong!

All of us want to feel good about ourselves, yet deep down within, we know that we’ve made our share of blunders in life. We’ve done things that are wrong. We have not always been absolutely honest. We’ve had impure thoughts. We’ve made unwise decisions. We are far from perfect!

The concept of the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden may not make a lot of sense in its own right, but it helps make sense of a lot of other things in life!

When we hear of Susan Smith drowning her two young children, or the brutal beating and killing of a little two-year-old boy by a twelve-year-old relative, or the mass killings in Africa (Rwanda and

Sudan), or the murder of innocent people in Red Lake High School (in northern Minnesota), or the massacre of young Amish girls (in a school in Pennsylvania)—we should recognize that these are not abnormal happenings, but are the product of self-centered natures resulting from the Fall.

Human beings, because of the far-reaching effects of the original sin (the resulting human depravity), are given to pride, greed, lust, hatred, impatience, jealousy, laziness, and procrastination. Those who talk about efforts to bring about major change in society often refuse to accept the Bible account of the original sin as a fact.

The Bible teaches that God created man in His own image but that humans fell and became sinful. Liberal theologians do not believe that man’s original nature has been corrupted; rather, they view human nature as being intrinsically good, and having the potential of developing further. What is needed, they say, is *not* some radical transformation by grace from without—but instead, more education to nurture the strengths and ideals that are within man.

Believers need a new recognition of their sinfulness. Our Sunday best is a facade to cover up the darkness that we know lurks inside us. We must restore our awareness of sin—and hate it, fear it, flee from it, and grieve over it. We will never feel the need for salvation if we don’t know that we have done anything wrong. Our natures are depraved, and we are inclined to do wrong—*not that* at every point we are as bad as we possibly can be, *but that* at no point is anyone as good as he should be! ■

—The article published here is adapted from the *BOTC Commentary on Genesis*, written by Harold Martin and published by Brethren Revival Fellowship. Reprinted by permission.

5. John Taylor, an English minister of Norwich, cried, “What a God *must He be*, who can curse His innocent creatures before they have a being. Is this thy God, O Christian?” (From *Original Sin: A Cultural History*, Alan Jacobs, reviewed in *Christianity Today*, July 2008, page 54).

## From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

# If You've Glimpsed God . . .

by Arlin Weaver

We know little about the Prophet Isaiah's life before he "saw also the Lord." Much of his story begins with his life-defining meeting with God.

Like Isaiah, most true believers will come to times and places in their lives where they meet God in special ways. There are three characteristics of these men and women who have caught holy glimpses of deity.

### **1. Those who have seen God know God for what He is.**

Invariably, when men and women glimpse the true holiness, majesty, and otherness of God, they worship. There is no alternative response, and only spiritual charlatans promote the dumbed-down, discounted views of a comfortable, cultural deity who fits into our expectations, and is useful to our personal or corporate agendas. God is God, thrice holy, and if the seraphims—who are constant witnesses of His glory and holiness—can only worship with awestruck astonishment day after day, then we, who are so accustomed to the grey darkness of this world, must surely

avert our eyes and fall silent in awe of the Shekinah glory.

### **2. Those who have seen God see themselves for what they are.**

Glimpses of glory leave us with few illusions—we, like Isaiah, are undone, unclean, foul. Aside from God's "live coal from the altar," we have no refuge from our unholliness and no escape from our anti-God spirits and dirty lives. Before God's glory, our spiritual bankruptcy is exposed.

Still, even as believers, we must again and again, and in every situation of life, choose between embracing illusions of our own glory or insisting on God's true glory. The saint who has truly seen God will be one who, like Jesus, "makes himself of no reputation," so that God may be all in all, and be magnified.

### **3. Those who have seen God abandon themselves for His use.**

When Isaiah saw God, he did not present his resumé. Instead, he unconditionally surrendered to the plan and purpose  
*(continued on page 15)*

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



*A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

## *Introduction to Quarter's Lessons*

The lessons for the Fall Quarter (September, October, November) are on the general theme of "Growing in God's Wisdom." Lessons are taken from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Matthew. The lessons from the Old Testament Wisdom Literature are under the subtheme of "Teaching and Learning." The five lessons from Matthew focus on "Jesus Teaches Wisdom."

Wisdom has been defined as: the power to judge rightly, good judgment, and following the soundest course of action. Another definition of wisdom is the right use of knowledge. Proverbs 4:7 instructs us that "wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

Wisdom is not only important, it is necessary for the enrichment of life and relationships. Our lessons will show us the source of true wisdom and its outworking in our lives.

Read context and allow these lessons to instruct you in the value of wisdom and the acquisition of wisdom to enhance your relationship with God and your fellow men.

May you truly grow in the wisdom of God this quarter.

## **SEPTEMBER 4, 2011**

### *The Blessings of Wisdom*

Proverbs 3:1-12

The Book of Proverbs consists of numerous short, pithy statements providing a course of instruction in the ways of life. While often not connected thematically, they all carry the underlying theme of wisdom for upright, godly living. They teach universal principles applicable to many of life's situations. The purpose of the Book of Proverbs is outlined in the first seven verses of Chapter 1, capped by verse 7 which tells us that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." Reverence for God and His law is the starting point for acquiring wisdom (see also 2:6). Start there and allow God to teach and guide you as you apply yourself to these lessons.

The first verse of our text is an example

of synonymous parallelism where both lines mean the same though couched in different terms. It is a call to hear the instruction of a father, followed (v. 2) by a corresponding blessing for obedience—a long and satisfying life.

The next appeal, verses 3 and 4, is to allow mercy and truth to permeate one's life. That will not only please God, it will also enhance interpersonal relationships and make life full and meaningful. And what makes life better than pleasing God and enjoying peace and harmony with one's fellow men?

Verses 5 and 6 have provided guidance for many a young person seeking a sure path in life. Complete trust in the Lord is an humble admission of one's own lack of wisdom for determining the best, safest, most secure path, and recognition of God's superior knowledge and His ability and willingness to provide the needed guidance.

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**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

Verses 7 and 8 warn against overconfidence in our own abilities or wisdom. Rather, keeping oneself from evil and living with reverence for God will give one a rich and satisfying life. Fullness of life comes from commitment to God, the pursuit of holiness and a realization of our own limitations, which result in submission to God's control and direction. Life is meaningful and worthwhile only with Him in control.

Verses 9 and 10 give further instruction for securing favor with God. In recognition of His blessing upon us we voluntarily share back to Him of the material possessions He has entrusted to us. The principle is that in response to His blessing we give back a portion to Him in gratitude. That has defined the reciprocal relationship between God and His people for all time, beginning with Abraham, to our day. God is eager and willing to bless His people but He also expects a corresponding and willing response to His blessings.

Because we are fallible human beings there will be times when God finds it necessary to discipline us for deviation from His will (verses 11, 12). We should not resent His correction, but recognize it as proof of His love for us. It is His desire that His children follow His will fully. Correction is sometimes needed to guide us back to the path He has chosen as best for us.

Verse 13 caps it all by saying that "happy is the man that findeth wisdom, . . . that getteth understanding." Seek wisdom with your whole heart.

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

1. Be sure to get an understanding of the structure, purpose, and method of the Book of Proverbs. Be sure, too, to understand what wisdom is.
2. What are some aids to remembering and keeping God's commandments? Discuss.
3. As we look at this passage, what are the incentives for keeping God's laws? Class sharing.
4. No doubt you have observed the difference between the person who faces life on his own and the person depend-

ent upon God for direction. Thank God for the peace, joy, and security found in allowing Him to direct your path.

5. Discuss the purpose and value of God's correction.
6. Summarize the path to wisdom. Discuss with your class.

*Lesson emphasis:* The purpose and value of acquiring wisdom for living, and how it is achieved.

*Key verses:* 5 and 6

## **SEPTEMBER 11, 2011**

### ***Hear the Instruction of a Father***

Proverbs 4:10-15, 20-27

We see again in this passage the cry of a father for his son to learn the wisdom of a disciplined life. It is the voice of experience speaking to the son uninitiated in the ways of life, urging him to follow the instruction he has been given. To do so will save him from many blunders and disappointments. It is human nature to go our own way. It is the height of wisdom to follow the voice of experience (read also verses 1-9).

Here again long and satisfying life is promised to the one who hears instruction, that is, hears both with understanding and application. The person who follows the advice of the experienced will avoid many pitfalls and setbacks in life. There is no reason to repeat life's mistakes if one is humble enough to hear the advice of others and profit from their instruction.

Instruction, which leads to wisdom, is to be pursued with all diligence and retained with all one's strength. Another accessory to gaining wisdom is simply the avoidance of evil. The father here uses many terms to urge the son to avoid the influence of evil persons whose lives are not guided by the principles of wisdom. As the Apostle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (see text verses 14 and 15).

In verse 20 the father again appeals to

his son to listen to his advice and thus profit from his observations and experience. His instructions are to be foremost in the mind and consciousness of the son. As one version states: "Let them penetrate deep within your heart." As a result the son will enjoy abundant life, a life of joy and health. The person free of the burden of sin will enjoy a well-rounded, vibrant life.

The heart, the seat of affections and decisions, is to be guarded with all diligence. It is the heart that directs the life. Therefore it must be kept clean and pure, free from evil influence. Let not your mouth be wayward, speak only what is pure and uplifting (v. 24). Jesus said it is "out of the . . . heart that the mouth speaketh." Guard your heart, and your lips will not betray you.

The eyes are also to be guarded, for what enters the mind through the eye carries much potential influence. Looking straight ahead implies not allowing your eyes to wander to things which would tempt or defile the mind.

Your feet can also carry you to unwholesome places, places which could defile the mind and cause one to veer from the safe path. However, it is not primarily the eye or the feet or the mouth, but the heart which directs these body parts which must be guarded with all diligence. It is a full-time task. One must be ever alert. Let's pay attention to the instruction of the older, experienced ones. It will save us from many errors and disappointments.

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

1. What should be our motivation for following the instruction of the more experienced—a good life, a long life, or what?
2. Why is it so often true that instead of listening to sound advice, we feel we must go out and experiment with life on our own? Discuss.
3. What are some safeguards against being led into evil? Discuss.
4. It is good to listen to advice, but how do we develop the self-discipline necessary to keep us from going the wrong way?

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5. Many of us have rejected advice to our hurt. How can those experiences best be used as a teaching tool?

*Lesson emphasis:* The importance of listening to the advice of mature, experienced individuals.

*Key verses:* 13 and 23

## **SEPTEMBER 18, 2011**

### ***The Value of Wisdom***

Proverbs 15:21-33

This passage from the last half of Chapter 15 has no consistent theme except the underlying value of applying wisdom to all of life's circumstances and decisions. There are various admonitions and counsels directed to maintaining the right path of life, the path that escapes Hell and leads to true life (v. 24). Throughout the passage we see righteousness and wickedness brought into stark contrast. We also note the extensive use of poetic parallelism in this chapter. (Study the various forms in a Bible commentary or dictionary.)

Due to the nature of this text our study will take a somewhat different route than usual. As you study, and if you teach, focus on the big picture, the contrasting values of life resulting from following either God's way (the way of wisdom) or the way of the fool who rejects the value of instruction and suffers judgment for his folly.

Verse 21: The person devoid of wisdom enjoys folly, not realizing its destructive impact. The wise man walks a straight, upright path.

Verse 22: Plans fail due to lack of counsel, but are carried out successfully where wise counsel is sought and followed (see also 11:14).

Verse 23: It brings joy to a person to give wise counsel, and an appropriate word at the right time is a blessing (see also 25:11).

Verse 24: The wise person seeks the way that leads upward, to a satisfying and godly life. Such an upright life delivers one from the destruction of Hell. This verse

**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

epitomizes the contrast between the way of righteousness and the way of evil. It clarifies the destinies of those who follow either route.

Verse 25: God hates pride. He will deal harshly with the proud, insolent person (see also Proverbs 6:16-19). Conversely, He watches over and provides for the helpless widow. God is merciful and He is just. He respects humility and judges pride.

Verse 26: The Lord hates even the thoughts of the wicked because they show a mind set at variance with His will. However, He is pleased with the speech of the upright person, because that indicates a pure heart.

Verse 27: A person who is greedy brings grief to himself and his household. A greedy person cares only for himself. But the person who refuses bribes shows himself trustworthy.

Verse 28: The upright, righteous person is careful how he answers; he thinks before he speaks. The wicked person blurts out without giving thought (see Matt. 12:34, 35).

Verse 29: The wicked has separated himself from God, therefore God is distant to him. But God's ear is open to even the feeblest prayer of the humble, righteous person.

Verse 30: A good outlook, a cheerful countenance, is good for the soul. Good news also brings joy. Cheerfulness is healthy.

Verse 31: The person who profits from rebuke is wise. He is an humble, teachable person.

Verse 32: He who ignores rebuke puts himself at a disadvantage. He is proud, ignorant, unwise. The person who accepts the discipline of reproof for personal development is wise.

Verse 33: "Humility and reverence for the Lord will make you both wise and honored" (*Living Proverbs*). Make that your goal.

### **For thought and discussion**

1. As you study this lesson and the various admonitions, keep in mind the great contrast between the way of wisdom and the way of folly.
2. What is it that makes some people impervious to instruction? Discuss.

3. Is there a correlation between a submissive attitude toward God and physical health?

4. All of us make wrong choices at times. What is a proper response when that happens, and how does that response affect us?

5. There are many life-principles spoken to in these verses: relationships, destiny, humility, selflessness, attitudes, speech, etc. Pick out one that has special meaning for your life and do further study.

*Lesson emphasis:* The importance of following God's way of wisdom in all areas of life.

*Key verses:* 24 and 33

## **SEPTEMBER 25, 2011**

### ***Discernment Fosters Wisdom***

Proverbs 25:1-10

Chapters 25 through 29 of Proverbs contain proverbs of Solomon transcribed by King Hezekiah's men. These were gathered and combined nearly 300 years after Solomon. This may have been in conjunction with the religious reforms instituted by Hezekiah. First Kings 4:32 tells us that Solomon wrote three thousand proverbs as well as a thousand and five songs. These appearing in the Book of Proverbs are only a sampling of Solomon's wisdom, chosen through God's providence to provide instruction and guidance for people of all time.

The proverbs in today's text speak to one's relationship to others, primarily in focus are kings and neighbors. These verses pretty well divide into sections of two or three verses, each with its particular theme. Note again the use of parallelism where second phrases either explain, enhance, or contrast with the first.

In verses 2 and 3 we see the contrast between God and kings. God knows all things. No man is His counselor and no one is privy to His counsels (see Romans 11:33). Kings, however, have limited understanding and must search out

answers to their problems. However, just as the scope of the heavens and earth are unfathomable, so also is the king's wisdom. As king he must be wiser than his subjects.

For the king to be successful in his reign, all that is wicked and antagonistic must be removed from his kingdom (verses 4 and 5). Purging of the kingdom is likened to the refining of silver. Only as the dross is removed will silver be pure and fit for the silversmith's use. Only as corrupting influences are removed can the king's reign be established in righteousness.

In verses 6 and 7 we see the wisdom of discretion. Those who put themselves forward in the presence of the king will likely suffer humility. Know your place, be humble. How much better to be invited to an honorable position than to be degraded and publically put to shame. Jesus spoke to this principle in a parable to the Pharisees regarding seeking prominent seating at a wedding feast (Luke 14:7-11). It is better to be invited higher than to be forced to a lower position.

Verses 8 through 10 speak of wisdom and discernment in solving disputes. Be cautious in bringing accusations, don't hastily take a matter to court. Think through all the implications and do not be harsh in judging. Facts may later emerge

which will put you to shame. It is better to speak privately with your neighbor in an effort to solve disputes rather than sharing the issue with others. The more widely an issue is known, the harder it is to resolve. Be discreet. Be charitable.

Apply the Golden Rule to all relationships and you will advance in wisdom and in favor with God and man.

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

1. Perhaps if you haven't already done so, you might want to pick a proverb from one of these lessons to make your life motto.
2. Why does God limit man's understanding in certain areas?
3. Has God ever put you through refining fires? Why does He do it? What was the result?
4. Few of us will stand before powerful men. But the Christian does have an obligation to those who rule over us. Discuss proper attitudes and other ways we can enhance our standing with them and our Christian witness to them.
5. What are the steps to resolving inter-personal issues? See Proverbs 15:1, 2. Some things to avoid?

*Lesson emphasis:* Discretion in personal relationships shows wisdom.

*Key verse:* 4 in its broad application ■



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## Study: How to Encourage Children

A growing body of studies is showing that it is important to praise children for their effort rather than their intelligence when they do well in school. A recent study had a group of students complete an easy test, and then complimented half on their intelligence and half on their hard work. Those complimented on their hard work did far better on a subsequent harder test. Also, when given a choice between an easy test that they were told they would do well on or a hard test that they were told was hard but that they would learn a lot from, those complimented for their hard work did the harder test and those complimented on their intelligence did the easier test.

Psychologist Carol Dweck who ran the study summarized, “When we praise children for their intelligence, we tell them that this is the name of the game: Look smart, don’t risk making mistakes. Emphasizing effort gives a child a variable that they can control. They come to see themselves as in control of their success. Emphasizing natural intelligence takes it out of the child’s control, and it provides no good recipe for responding to a failure.”

*New York Magazine* writes further: “In follow-up interviews, Dweck discovered that those who think that innate intelligence is the key to success begin to discount the importance of effort. *I am smart*, the kids’ reasoning goes; *I don’t need to put out effort*. Expending effort becomes stigmatized—it’s public proof that you can’t cut it on your natural gifts.”

While this study was done on children—who are impressionable and thus will respond dramatically to parents’ and other authorities’ attitude toward them—I am

quite certain that these studies can also be accurately applied to adult-to-adult relationships, attitudes, and words of praise.

—Source: *New York Magazine*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Amish Woman Dies From Laundry Accident

A 32-year-old Amish woman from Smicksburg, PA, died after relying on home remedies instead of going to a hospital. She was doing her laundry over a fire and burned herself (first, second, and third degree burns) after throwing kerosene on the fire. She leaves behind a husband and six children.

There are times when home remedies are appropriate, especially when administered by those with medical experience who can spot complicating factors like infections and seek appropriate help. However, home remedies are never appropriate for things like cancer or burns this serious.

—Source: *CBS KDKA 2 Pittsburgh*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Rare Drop in Sunspot Activity

While the level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere (which is what climate change alarmists are worried about) affects the earth’s temperature, sunspot activity influences it far more. New data released by the solar physics division of the American Astronomical Society at their annual meeting reveals that the sun is most likely going into a rare period of hibernation.

*The International Business Times* writes, “Even though the sun has been active recently as it heads towards solar maximum in 2013, there are three lines of evidence

including a missing jet stream in the solar interior, fading sunspots on the sun's visible surface, and changes in the corona and near the poles, suggesting that the next 11-year-long solar cycle will be far quieter than the current one or it may not even happen.

"There are some scientists at the conference who said the current findings from the studies mean that we are at the beginning of a Maunder Minimum, a 70-year period that began around 1645 when hardly any sunspots were observed. This decline in sunspots coincided with below-normal temperatures, in a climate period known as the Little Ice Age that struck Europe and North America, where temperatures dropped by 1.8 to 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit (1-1.5 degrees Celsius). But scientists warn that the temperature change due to a decline in sunspot activity would likely be minimal and not enough to compensate for global warming."

—Source: *International Business Times*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Amishman Charged With Solicitation of Minor**

Willard Yoder of Milroy, IN, sent 600 explicit texts, pictures, and videos of himself to a twelve-year-old girl he discovered by sending a text to a random number. The girl told her mother who told police. Police set up a sting operation, continuing the texting exchange posing as the girl. Yoder set up a meeting with the girl via text message with a clear description of what he was going to do at the meeting. When Yoder clip-clopped up to the meeting place in his buggy, police arrested him.

*Fox 11* quotes the girl's mother as saying, "We have always discussed with our kids that they can come to us with anything and she did that. She [the daughter] is the hero in all of this."

This is a sobering reminder of the extreme danger of a works-based religion, not only to our own salvation, but also to those around us. When only the external is restrained and the heart isn't right, the heart will manifest itself in the external, often in the manner of a pent-up dam. We

must disciple the hearts of our people and have a real relationship with Christ.

—Sources: *6 News Indy, Fox 11 Wisconsin*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Newborn Experiencing Withdrawal**

"Bangor, ME—The mother got the call in the middle of the night: her three-day-old baby was going through opiate withdrawal in a hospital here and had to start taking methadone, a drug best known for treating heroin addiction, to ease his suffering.

"The mother had abused prescription painkillers like OxyContin for the first 12 weeks of her pregnancy, buying them on the street in rural northern Maine, and then tried to quit cold turkey—a dangerous course, doctors say, that could have ended in miscarriage. The baby had seizures in utero as a result, and his mother Tonya turned to methadone treatment, with daily doses to keep her cravings and withdrawal symptoms at bay.

"As prescription drug abuse ravages communities across the country, doctors are confronting an emerging challenge: newborns dependent on painkillers. While methadone may have saved Tonya's pregnancy, her son Matthew needed to be painstakingly weaned from it.

"Infants like him may cry excessively and have stiff limbs, tremors, diarrhea, and other problems that make their first days of life excruciating. Many have to stay in the hospital for weeks while they are weaned off the drugs, taxing neonatal units and driving the cost of their medical care into the tens of thousands of dollars.

"Like the cocaine-exposed babies of the 1980s, those born dependent on prescription opiates—narcotics that contain opium or its derivatives—are entering a world in which little is known about the long-term effects on their development. Few doctors are even willing to treat pregnant opiate addicts, and there is no universally accepted standard of care for their babies, partly because of the difficulty of conducting research on pregnant women and newborns."

—Excerpt from "Newly Born, and Withdrawing From Painkillers" on the *New York Times* front page, April 10, 2011.

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### News Snippets

An unemployed North Carolina man without health insurance had numerous health problems, so he peacefully robbed a bank of \$1 in order to become incarcerated and receive free health care. – *UK Guardian*

A Houston-area WalMart shopper with the ironic name Monique Lawless pursued three men who had stolen several cases of beer, and after jumping up and down on their hood and roof didn't stop them, she chased them with her car until police caught up with them. – *Houston Chronicle*

NYC atheists are angrily threatening lawsuits after the city of New York renamed a street near a Brooklyn fire station (which had been the home base of seven firefighters killed on 9/11) to "Seven in Heaven" Way in their honor; during public hearings on the change, attendees were unanimous and enthusiastic in support of the change. NYC Atheists president said, "There should be no signage or displays of religious nature in the public domain. It's really insulting to us. We've concluded as atheists there is no Heaven and there's no Hell."

The Brooklyn Borough President said, "These seven brave souls who put their lives on the line and ultimately gave up the most precious gift that could be given, believe me are in Heaven for serving us so admirably."

The President of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission commented, "There are cities that have religious connotations in their names, why not a street," Land said.

"Do they want us to rename Los Angeles, Corpus Christi, and St. Joseph?"

– *Fox News*

"Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, denounced Republicans last week for believing illegal immigration 'should in fact be a crime.'"

– *CNS News*

A liberal polling organization did a poll that found that everyone that believed in

the rapture would indeed be raptured—a liberal dream come true—Obama would win the next election handily. All that this little poll highlights is that conservative Christians who actually believe the Bible tend to vote against Obama.

– *Public Policy Polling*

Five Russian nuclear scientists who were working on the Iranian nuclear program died in a plane crash. As always, the CIA or Mossad are accused of having a hand in it.

– *Haaretz*

A cheap heroin substitute that can be cooked up from household ingredients is ravaging Russian junkies. When they are unable to afford expensive heroin, they brew this substitute, a putrid brownish sludge that quickly turns their skins scaly, earning the name *krokodil* (crocodile). Russia has the most heroin users in the world at two million and as there is some recent success at stemming the flow of Afghan heroin, prices have gone up, and addicts are turning to *krokodil*. I've seen the results of heroin and meth, but *krokodil* users beggar description. It reminds me of a group of people Jesus dealt with: lepers.

– *UK Independent*

As always, I welcome your feedback to [hansmast@hansmast.com](mailto:hansmast@hansmast.com).

### IF YOU'VE GLIMPSED GOD . . . cont'd.

of God. In essence, his response suggests, "Here I am, however unclean—apart from Your live coals. Send me—at whatever cost or through whatever pain—that You may be glorified." This is the mark of the servant of God who has seen God. And rest assured, the result of any other spirit of service will be mere wood, hay, or stubble in the kingdom of God.

In conclusion, if you have glimpsed God, *you will worship, you will confess, and you will surrender*. Anything less is an affront to His glory, a denial of His majesty, and a rejection of His person—and anything less, for you, will prove soul-destroying. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the *Ontario Informer*, June 2011.



## Sermon of the Month



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

### “Come Out of Her, My People”

by H. C. VanWormer

#### The Duty of God’s People Is Plain in This Day

*“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).*

Here is a clear-cut call to separation. Of course, we know that in its primary interpretation it is prophetic, addressed to the Tribulation saints of that day. However, it is also a warning to believers in our day who even now can discern the true character of this rising religious system. For we are rapidly moving toward a “one world,” that is, a unified political system and a unified religious system.

Can anyone who has any spiritual discernment at all deny that such a religious system is not now rising in our midst? There are always those well-meaning people who feel that they can remain within an apostate religious system and reform it. But the command from Heaven is unmistakably clear, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins” (Rev. 18:4). The call is imperative, for an apostate religious system cannot be remodeled on Scriptural lines, and hence there is only one course open to the faithful—one of thorough separation from that which falsely bears the Name of Christ. The call is based on two grounds: (1) “That ye have not fellowship in her sins.” By remaining in it they would become partakers of her guilt. (2) “That ye do not receive of her plagues.” The warning here is on account of conse-

quences—judicial and governmental.

It is the same advice as the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy when he said, “From such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5b). He didn’t tell him to play ball with the apostate of his day as we are hearing so much about today. He even advised Titus to reject a heretic after the first and second admonition, which sounds mighty uncomfortably intolerant to this modern apostate religious system. Even the gentle John forbade hospitality to those who abode not in the doctrine of Christ, asserting that “he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 11). To be sure, we are not advised to bawl him out and throw stones after him until he is out of sight. But neither is there any encouragement for that fashionable modern fellowship with unbelievers which is advocated so vociferously today.

The call to separation has come to the people of God in every age. It came to Abraham (Gen. 12:1); to Lot (Gen. 19:12-14); to Moses (Num. 16:23-26); to His people Israel—“Go ye forth of Babylon” (Isa. 48:20); “Remove out of the midst of Babylon” (Jer. 50:8); “Go ye out of the midst of [Babylon]” (Jer. 51:45). And in the New Testament we read, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. . . . Wherefore

come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Cor. 6:14-17). “Neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22).

The Early Church maintained a true separation. This was the secret of her power and influence upon the generation of her day. It was intolerant of any substitute way of salvation other than that through Jesus Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). That makes it strait and narrow; however, that is not what we are hearing in some localities these days. They advocate that Jesus is the best way but that other erroneous doctrines are good and will lead to God just the same. Union meetings of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews create the impression that a general superficial faith in God is enough without specific saving faith in Christ. Now, that cannot be true for no man comes to the Father but by Christ. The New Testament Church was intolerant of anything that threatened to compromise this Gospel of No Other Name.

This New Testament Church was intolerant of sin in its midst. Today such a church would be called “exclusive” and “narrow.” There would be plenty who would predict that they wouldn’t get anywhere until it became inclusive and tolerant with a lowered standard. Some would be so bold as to say: “Why the Lord Himself couldn’t get into this church.” This is what we hear today in the Holiness Church about those who are trying to hold the standard God laid down for the Church. We are calling weakness what God calls sin. We shelter sin in the church, coddle it, excuse it, condone it; and, if a preacher dares anymore to cry out against it, he is advised, “Don’t be too hard, nobody is perfect and you have no right to judge.” We have so let down the bars that anybody can get into a church and nobody ever gets out. If we would raise the standard to the New Testament position it would stop this rush of superficial discipline and win respect from the world where now

there is ridicule. The world is sick and disgusted with the church making a clown of itself, trying to talk the slang of this age and putting on rummage sales. The church and preacher that stands for God, righteousness, and true holiness will be magnified. This New Testament Church was not a club for improving the old Adam but it was a fellowship of people who believed in Jesus Christ as the One and only Saviour. Today we are sacrificing depth for width and it is leading to apostasy.

They did not tolerate, gloss over, nor excuse sin. There, no doubt, were plenty of liars in Jerusalem but they were not in the church. By the grace of God this church rose to the occasion and cleaned house when Ananias and Sapphira appeared. But today we condone sin until those who are guilty even of gross wrongdoing are given prominent places. We are beginning to pay a fearful price for our sweet tolerance of sin within the church. We had rather be called almost anything else on earth today than narrow, exclusive, or straight. But this New Testament Church had a healthy, holy intolerance that brought God’s blessing upon them. People didn’t join this church carelessly. They were afraid to. There was a holy awe that kept people from rushing into it because it was the nice thing to do and because it gave them prestige. There was a holy repulsion. It meant something to unite with this church. This is the last thing we want today even in the Holiness Church. We are always trying to attract with our programs, prizes, picnics, and what not. Let us give you an example of what we mean. This is taken from what was published in a church paper.

“We promised to keep you posted on our S.S. Contest. The Army won though it was nip and tuck right up to the last Sunday. The S.S. was divided into two teams. Each team was racing rockets through the moon and planets to the sun. On the evening of April 2 we had the ‘pay off’ party. The Air Force donated, served, and cleaned up after refreshments for more than 80. The party program consisted of a variety program—monologues, pantomimes, vocal and instrumental

numbers, poems, audience participation, and a truth or consequences game . . .

“Highlights of the evening came during the truth or consequences game. Our S.S. men proved themselves wonderful sports. All had to pay the consequences which consisted of acting out character parts in two skits. The S.S. superintendent played the part of Felix the Cat. He lapped milk from a saucer, purred (in snorts), and did all manner of things which are a part of a cat’s existence. A teacher of the Adult Bible Class and Captain of the Army team played the part of Grandma. He was all decked out in skirt and shawl. He had such a struggle with his knitting that he knocked his play glasses off and broke them. The intermediate boys’ class teacher was Pluto, a German Shepherd puppy, in the second skit. He chewed slippers, dug holes, and performed many tricks devouring dog biscuits (Wheat Chex) as his rewards.”

Is not this a definite sign of this apostate condition sweeping into the Holiness Church? How do you think the Blessed Holy Spirit can set His seal and sanction upon such a performance in the name of the religion of Jesus Christ?

To draw people we have catered to the world, have let the world slap the church on the back in coarse familiarity, and have yielded to a hazy standard of right and wrong until the old line of demarcation has practically disappeared in the average Holiness Church. We are cluttered up with people who should never have joined us. You don’t have to be different to be a church member now. The other day we learned of a so-called Holiness Church which is boasting of the number who are being saved but they still smoke, drink a little, and carry on as they did before except now they feel they are saved. What a tragedy that a Holiness Church could come down to such a level! We need a holy repulsion and definite line of demarcation.

Now let us see what happened as the Early Church cleaned house. Read it: “And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by

the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)” (Acts 5:11-14). This church had favor with all the people. The church that stands in the power of the Spirit wins the respect of the people.

In our trying to attract we have driven folks away in disgust. A church that is Spirit-filled as this church was will make some people stand back but it will also attract. The attraction will be the Holy Spirit and He will draw out those who really believe.

Dr. James DeForest Murch stated that “the tragic thing about the church’s abdication of its moral and spiritual sovereignty and its concern for the salvation of the individual is that modern society is now plunging into what promises to be the greatest moral debacle in history. With all the nation’s talk about the Great Society and all the church’s talk about the Kingdom of God on earth, America is in an advanced state of moral decline which if continued will lead inevitably to the ‘City of Decay’ and the ‘Valley of Doom.’ With the very best of intentions liberal leadership in the church and state is advocating lawlessness in the arena of civil rights; treating crime as a disease and not as sin; protecting the rights of criminals and disregarding the plight of their victims; destroying individual responsibility in favor of social consensus; and accepting economic and political corruption as justifiable means for the achievement of good ends. Never has the line between good and evil been as blurred and indistinct as it is today. Like Pilate of old, church and government leaders are asking, ‘What is truth?’ and like the men of Sodom, ‘What is right and wrong?’ ”

A vast international system of error, religious in character and so close in resemblance to Christianity that millions will be deceived by it, is now appearing in this

combination of apostate Protestantism, Romanism, and Atheism. It is the huge ecumenical church of the last days. This religious monstrosity is taking shape before our eyes even now, and it is being heralded as a step forward toward unity and world peace. To oppose it one is considered to be divisive and all the other epithets this liberal-minded group can make up. But, regardless of what they say, our duty as a Christian is plain: "Come out of her."

You may say, "But I am a member of the Holiness Church." True, we have not gone this far. We are not denying the Blood Atonement, Virgin Birth, Resurrection, etc. But are we not on our way to an apostate system with the ridicule, scorn, and vicious opposition which is rising in so many quarters against the clear-cut lines of Bible separation, the standards of conduct and spiritual fervency which the Holiness Church has held during her existence until now? Is there not a gradual lowering of the standards of modesty, of the stand against adornment, and of the attitude against questionable amusement until we are talking about sectionalism? In one area it is all right but in another it is wrong, until a preacher is advised to preach one thing in one section and another thing in a different section. Is this not a double standard of principle and conduct? When we came into the Holiness Church forty-four years ago there was none of this. The same thing was preached in all Holiness churches and in every section. What about the downgrading and the assassination of the character of those who hold to what they were taught when they came into the Holiness Church? Of course they wouldn't deny the infallibility of the Scriptures but what is back of the present interpretation of the Scriptures which the Holiness Church used to say meant certain things along the line of conduct, adornment, modesty, etc., but now a different meaning is placed upon these Scriptures? Is this not the beginning of the road to denial of other essentials later? Does this not reveal an apostate tendency? It is a matter of where this tendency and these

trends are leading us. Read the history of other denominations and we can readily see that they ended in an apostate system. There is no doubt in my thinking that the Holiness Church has started on the track that Paul talks about in Romans 1 where the heathen world reached the bottom "because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge and God gave them over to a reprobate mind"—"a mind without judgment." Look around you and you will see the Holiness Church going back into the very things she has stood against all these years and see if this is not what is happening—an apostate religious system is beginning to raise its head in our midst.

We are rapidly coming to the Day of Decision. It is my conviction that we never stood at a more crucial moment than we are now standing in the Holiness Church. There never was a day when our decisions would be more decisive, determinative, and final than it is going to be in these days in which we live and in this moment in which we find ourselves.

Yet in the face of this rising apostate religious system we must remember that God has given us definite directions of what we must do. The Scriptural injunction to separate cannot be ignored. There may be some painful decisions that we may have to make but our duty is plain. We must keep ourselves clear from the apostate religious system—for God's people are not of this world system (John 17:14, 16). God's people are not to ally themselves with this rising apostate religious system which is springing up in our midst on the pretense that they can give a testimony and attempt to change those who are in it. To do so is to violate the plain teaching of God's Word. The reason is plain: "For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" (Revelation 18:5). The sins of this unchanging unrepentant apostate religious system He will remember and punish. Therefore, "come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Evangelist of Truth*, January 2011.

# The Principled Use of Leisure Time

by Ronald Border

*“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober,  
and watch unto prayer” (1 Peter 4:7).*

These words penned nineteen hundred years ago call us to immediate responsibility. The Christian lives now in a time of crisis. This world will soon pass away. The sinners will face condemnation and judgment and the saints will abide in grace and mercy. Sinners generally disregard the coming judgment, while the saints stand in awe before His terrible majesty even in this life.

Knowing that “the end of all things” is imminent, the Christian’s mind, life, attitudes, business relationships, and even leisure must be affected. It is our conviction that the same Biblical principles which govern the Christian’s life will also be preeminent in his leisure activities. Christian responsibility makes no difference between life and leisure. There are several principles by which we can examine our leisure activities that, by God’s grace, our life and leisure might be consistent.

1) No leisure activity can be acceptable if it has harmful effects on the person who indulges in it. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

Some leisure activities (or bad habits) may harm a person’s *physical* health. Alcohol has caused cirrhosis of the liver, led to blindness, and impaired man’s reactions to the extent that the drunken man is a hazard on the highway. Mind-expanding drugs have destroyed the minds of many promising young people. The Surgeon-General of the United States issues a warning with

each pack of cigarettes. Illicit extramarital relationships often generate terrible diseases which are passed on to the children.

Any activities which would weaken a man’s character or moral fiber, we reject, as they have a harmful effect on a person’s *spiritual* health. We believe television, movies, and pornography to be three (of many) areas which serve to weaken man’s moral fiber. Corroboration of this thesis may be evidenced in America’s declining moral standards. It is not uncommon for a child to spend several hours in front of the television set during the course of a day. Corruption is certain when the child’s constant examples are murders, fornications, and foolish jestings. Alcohol and drugs once more deserve our condemnation as they remove conscience-inspired inhibitions. In short, we reject all leisure activity which may harm man physically, spiritually, or morally.

2) No leisure activity can be acceptable if it has harmful effects on others. “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” (Matthew 18:6, 7).

Man, as a social being, has a responsibility to others. It is not enough for a Christian to merely recognize his responsibility to God or to himself. He must live his life responsibly before the others also! These words from the Book of Matthew under-

score the thought that it is possible for us to be a “stumbling block” in someone else’s path. No matter who we are or how old we are—someone is watching us. We will have an influence on someone to the good *or* to the bad.

Our activities may provide inspiration to holiness or they may provide fuel to the unbridled lusts of sin. Someone is watching us! Will he be helped or will he be hurt? If someone has been corrupted (physically or spiritually) by following our example in a dubious leisure activity, it would be well for us to admit that we have fault in the matter. (Perhaps we are not completely at fault; but we, nonetheless, must share it!) In leisure or in life, it is never right to teach others to do wrong, to invite them to do wrong, or to drive them to do wrong. Even “making light” of sin may work terrible destruction in a struggling soul. May we be careful to leave those leisure activities which would serve to make “shipwreck” of another of God’s precious jewels!

3) No leisure activity can be acceptable if it leads to addiction. “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1 Cor. 9:27).

Subjection is a key word in this portion which, we feel, warrants our attention. The word *subjection* may be defined, with the aid of the Latin root words, as “the state of being thrown under” or “under the authority of.” We believe the apostle to be saying in this verse that he has his body under the control or authority of Christ. We believe this to be necessary for each and every Christian in life and in leisure. We believe that Christ cannot fully have His way in our lives if He does not have control over every area. The alcoholic or drug addict cannot surrender himself completely to God while he is yet under the influence of his “master.” Although drinking and drugs may have seemed harmless and controllable in the beginning, victims across the world cry out, “We can’t stop!” Recent literature reports that one out of every three people who “take that first drink” will become an alcoholic to one degree or another. Alcoholism,

like addiction, means the body becomes dependent upon that particular outside influence. (The body needs it!) Alcoholism and addiction, like sin, gradually extend their roots claiming more and more of the body. As Christians, our body must be preserved—*all* of it—for God’s use. We may ask ourselves, “Do I control my body?” or “Does it control me?” God’s plan in life and leisure is a body under the control of Jesus Christ. (Christian friends, if you have a friend or relative ensnared in such a trap, remember there is a sure delivery through Jesus Christ!)

4) No leisure activity can be acceptable if, in order to indulge in it, we must do without some of the essentials of life. “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8).

Several years ago we were involved in a program working with poor and “underprivileged” youth in one of our larger cities. There we learned that, often, essentials of life (food and clothing) were assigned a secondary role in the family’s meager budget while the leisure activities took precedence in the monetary allocations. Fathers would squander the family’s money on drink or gambling while the children went hungry. (Not in every case, of course!) The common needs of food, clothing, and shelter are often neglected by drug addicts in favor of the expensive drugs they “must” purchase. As a result, health and happiness necessarily suffer. We can yet make further application of this principle. Provision for the family, in the Christian sense, is not in terms of money alone. Christian parents must give of themselves too. Excessive time spent on the job or on other diversions may be robbing the family of the parental presence and guidance that it so desperately requires. God’s plan for the Christian home is that *spiritual* and *physical* essentials are provided and that no leisure activity should disrupt or replace these basic operatives.

The complete abandon of the “worldly”  
(continued on page 23)



## Counseling From the Word

# TRUE POWER: Servanthood, Humility, and Obedience

by Jeremy Lelek

What is the goal of counseling? For some, it is to “fix” a spouse or a rebellious child. For others, it is to find relief from depression or anxiety. Still, for others, it is to heal “wounds” from the past. While mending relationships and seeking Biblical answers for difficult problems are worthwhile goals, the essence of the Christian life is to reflect in one’s attitude the very nature of Jesus Christ regardless of the situation. Philippians 2:5-9 offers a divine glimpse of that to which all believers should aspire in this regard: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself *of no reputation [nothing]*, and took upon him the form of a *servant*, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled* himself, and became *obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross.”

It is here, in these striking words (i.e., making self nothing, being a servant, humility, and obedience), that one finds the final definition of the word *POWER*. While the spouse or parent may seek power via dominance, winning, manipulating, criticizing, name-calling, shutting down, or attacking, the Biblical answer to relational conflict is “seek to have the attitude of Jesus.” The same may be said of those who struggle with depression or hurt from others: “Seek to have the attitude of Christ Jesus.” Far from being a trite platitude to

be applied as a Band-Aid for a superficial wound, these words pierce the very depths of human existence.

Seek to unpack with counselees the precious qualities that make up the amazing attitude of Jesus Christ. For example, when facing difficulty with a spouse, rather than turn to self-centered schemes of relating, what does it mean to **make self nothing**? Instead of manipulating, criticizing, or dominating, what would it look like to **serve** the offending spouse?

When depressed, how does one **humble** him or herself before God? When the cry of the depressed heart is to “isolate, avoid, give up, or escape,” the humble heart says, “Father, not my will, but Yours be done.” Humility may be expressed by finding ways, within the day, to love God and others rather than escaping into the darkness of the mind. Depression, though seemingly paralyzing, cannot bind the heart of the believer from doing what he or she was created to do: love.

Finally, what does it mean to walk in **obedience** for that individual who continues to wrestle with previous sins from others? The focus should not be healing, but worship. Again, the attitude of Christ as He prepared to willingly face agony and death at the hands of others was “What does My Father want?” His mind was not fixed upon His own healing or needs but upon the will of His Father in Heaven. And the will of His Father was motivated by a love for His children.

Counsel others in the beauty of obedience for the glory of God and for the sake of others. This may take many forms including rebuking a believing offender (Luke 17:3), loving one's enemy (Luke 6:27), overcoming evil with good (Romans 12:21), or making one's self nothing, serving others, and being humble in the process (Philippians 2:5-8).

Developing the attitude of Jesus Christ is trans-contextual. It does not matter what the context of one's situation (i.e., depression, marital disharmony, anxiety, past offenses and sins, drunkenness, sexual idolatry, fear of man, or parenting), the overriding theme, for the believer, must be to pursue the attitude of Christ Jesus. It is only as this attitude becomes more consistent that the believer is equipped to honor the highest privilege to

which he or she has been called: to worship the one, true, and living God. There is no greater goal in life to pursue than this!

### **Recommendations for Counseling**

1. Assess the overriding goals of your counselee. What is his or her greatest aim within the counseling process?
2. Find ways to point counselees toward an attitude of Christ. Help them unpack the words *making self nothing, serving, humility, and obedience*.
3. Help your counselee apply these concepts to the particulars of his or her situation.
4. Seek to imitate these qualities in your own counseling ministry and life. ■

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### **USE OF LEISURE TIME . . . cont'd.**

leisure program is seemingly based on a different standard than the one used for daily life. Many factories will not allow "drinking on the job" because they recognize the potential danger of slower reactions. These same factories will sponsor drinking parties at regular intervals throughout the year for entertainment. Life and leisure are inseparable in Christian thought. The Christian's witness must be pure. Purity means God-inspired consistency. This means that the Christian's life will be stable, sure, grounded, and unchanging in the daily experiences and the leisure activities. Our transformed nature must touch every area of our experience. Here the "world" takes note. God has something to say concerning every attitude and activity of the Christian. Oh, if we only would listen to His voice!

We trust that God will bless this examination as He did the food for the multitude. It is our prayer that the applications of these principles which *you* make in *your own* experience will serve to further sanctify your life and leisure so that you might have . . . real happiness. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the booklet *The Christian View of Competitive Sports* by R. J. Border.

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### **WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE? . . . cont'd.**

*hope is in thee.*" It felt like I was trying to lift a mountain but then the light began to dawn. The problem was not the amount of work to do or the fact that I wasn't getting it finished. The problem was in the location of my treasure. My value was staked in my ability to complete all my work. Not a bad thing to treasure, unless it eclipses the knowledge of my relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what was out of focus. I loved an illusion of productivity more than Jesus.

Reordering treasure opens the door to repentance. In my case, repentance looked like willingness to admit I couldn't do all I had planned. It meant quitting early on Saturday to spend some time enjoying God and my wife instead of seeking pleasure in tasks completed. I began savoring the reality that relationship with Jesus brings freedom from my identity as a man who is finished with his tasks. Instead I'm a man who is loved by Jesus. I can hang my life on friendship with Jesus. Performance is important, but relationship is more important. There is rest when Jesus reorders the things I love. He gives me the ability to choose what I treasure. What are you hanging your life on? ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Life Ministries Newsletter*, Dec. 2010.



# Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

“... singing with understanding!”

## “O Holy Angels Bright”

by Baxter/Glick



The Shenandoah Christian Music Camp is a week-long camp held annually in Harrisonburg, Virginia. It focuses on providing basic musical training and skills to the conservative Anabaptist community, and the campers come from all over the United States and Canada. Here is the camp's mission, in their own words (from the website: *musiccamp.info*):

Our goal is to promote musical excellence with spiritual vitality. We intend to offer a deeper look into the purposes of music within the Kingdom of God, and to help equip His people to operate skillfully within that purpose. Our vision is that the Camp would provide theologically sound and musically competent training as a resource to the conservative Anabaptist community and would inspire a greater appreciation and capacity for excellent music that glorifies God.

Part of the camp's vision is to encourage and facilitate the composition of new music within its constituency. To this end, for the last couple of years the camp has commissioned a new hymn tune to be premiered during the camp week and taken home with the campers. “O Holy Angels Bright” is the hymn that was commissioned for the 2011 camp, which was held in June.

The text for this hymn was originally written during the 17th century, and has been revised several times over the

years. Each verse speaks to a different group of individuals, calling them to sing praises to God. The first group specified is the angels, and they are invoked to “assist our song.” The previously departed saints comprise the next group asked to join in praise, from their vantage point on the other side. The third group encouraged to sing praises are all the saints currently living on earth. The final addressee is simply “My soul . . .” If all of the aforementioned groups of individuals are to sing praises, we should certainly do our part as well!

Wendell Glick from Waterloo, Ontario, was the composer commissioned to write the new tune for this hymn. A graduate of the University of Toronto and Wilfrid Laurier University, Wendell is currently involved in various aspects of teaching and conducting choirs. He also serves as youth pastor at his church, Countryside Mennonite Fellowship in Hawkesville, Ontario. He is married to Janelle, and they have two boys, Lucas and Dante.

One other item that may deserve mention here: As part of the “new music” vision, the Shenandoah Christian Music Camp is currently hosting a hymn-writing competition in two stages. The first stage is for an original text, to be set to music by the contestants of the second stage. Anyone is welcome and encouraged to enter. The text and tune selected by a committee will each be rewarded \$300.

# O Holy Angels Bright

WATERLOO 6.6.6.6.4.4.4.4.

RICHARD BAXTER, 1615-1691; REV. JOHN HAMPDEN GURNEY, 1838

ALT. BY SHENANDOAH CHRISTIAN MUSIC CAMP HYMN COMMITTEE, 2011 WENDELL DAVID GLICK, 2011

O ho - ly an - gels bright who wait at God's right hand,  
O bles - sed souls at rest, who ran this earth - ly race  
O saints, who toil be - low, a - dore your heav'n - ly King,  
My soul, bear up your part, tri - umph in God a - bove;

or through the realms of light fly at your Lord's com - mand,  
and now, from sin re - leased, be - hold your Sav - ior's face,  
and on - ward as you go some joy - ful an - them sing;  
and with a well-tuned heart sing out the songs of love!

as - sist our song, for else the theme too high should seem for mor - tal tongue.  
his prais - es sound, as in his sight with sweet de - light you do a - bound.  
take what he gives and praise him still, through good or ill, who ev - er lives!  
Let all your days till life shall end what - e'er he send, be filled with praise!

Words copyright ©2011 by Shenandoah Christian Music Camp. [www.musiccamp.info](http://www.musiccamp.info).

Music copyright ©2011 by Wendell David Glick and Shenandoah Christian Music Camp.

## HYMN-WRITING COMPETITION

Hymn text submission by October 1, 2011.

The selected text will be posted by November 1.

Composers will have until March 1, 2012 to submit a tune.

Send entries to: Shenandoah Christian Music Camp

P. O. Box 6 • Singers Glen, VA 22850

or e-mail to [hymncontest@musiccamp.info](mailto:hymncontest@musiccamp.info).

# Patience Is a Virtue

*(I Don't Always Have)*

*Why missionaries need your prayers*

by Denise Braun

Recently we arrived in Russia and had to register our family. The process of registration is a carry-over from Communism that helps keep tabs on where people live. On the day of registration, Bill left to get in line before the office opened at 9:30 a.m. There is a system in place in Russia where people arrive and take note of who is ahead of them. As they keep arriving, they ask who is last, and then they fall in behind the last person. Occasionally, they have a paper and pen and the people in line fill in their names to keep the order straight. In this case Bill was second behind a man who had spent the night in his car near the office building.

Bill called around 9 a.m. to tell me to bring the children quickly because he was next in line. We scrambled to get to the office and arrived around 9:40 a.m., expecting to be seen rather quickly.

Then we waited. And we waited and waited some more. Meanwhile, the children were getting restless, and a drunk man was in Bill's face yelling that he was ahead of him. Our neighbor, a deacon from our church who had traveled with us, squared his shoulders back and yelled right back at the man, telling him that BILL WAS NEXT IN LINE. The drunk man persisted, testing Bill's patience, until a quick look at "the list" confirmed that Bill, indeed, was next.

Eleven rolled by, and then we watched the clock strike noon. Bill had been in and out of the office, filling out forms. All eight of them, which contained the same information, needed to be completed error free.

I hadn't been prepared for such a wait since we were second in line that morning. Our son Isaiah needed to be changed. I

hadn't brought diapers or anything else for that matter. The children were starving and were climbing the walls.

As for me? I was just plain mad. At one point during this process, I banged on the door and let the employees know "that people are waiting out here!" At 1:40 p.m., I had finished my part, which took about five minutes. Finally, Bill escorted our ragged bunch home. He immediately returned to the office and was there until after 3 o'clock.

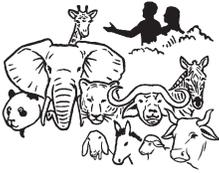
Why do I share this story? So that you will know that we are just normal, flawed people? No, you already knew that. I share this so you will understand some of the types of struggles we face in our life overseas. Things that would be quick and simple in North America are unnecessarily difficult and frustrating in Russia (and other mission fields).

After our registration experience I had to ask God to forgive me. I had lost any platform from which to share the Gospel due to my anger and impatience. Often situations in which we mingle with Russians provide opportunities for witnessing, but on this day I would have died of embarrassment had I been asked by any of the others in line, "Why are you here in Russia anyway?"

"Oh, well, uh, I am here to share with you how Christ can change your life."

I know that this is true—I cannot represent Him well. God has to empower me through His Holy Spirit at ALL times to live and to respond rightly—whether I am in a Russian registration line, on the bus being yelled at by a rude person, or in our home as we deal with just the ordinary frustrations of life. ■

—from *ABWE Message*. Used with permission.



## Beginning Issues



GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

# Creation Definitions

from *Answers in Genesis*

The term **creationism** is often used in a derogatory sense to suggest the inferiority of a religious viewpoint (as opposed to a claimed scientific viewpoint exclusive to evolution), but this use is deceptive. The belief in creation is not an auxiliary belief attached to the Bible; instead, creation is the logical conclusion of a clear reading and understanding of Genesis in its intended form—that is, as a historical narrative. This historical narrative, which was given to humanity by the infallible Creator, is the basis and foundation upon which a Biblical worldview is based.

There are various forms of creationism, including old-earth creationism, progressive creationism, and young-earth creationism (some also label the Intelligent Design Movement as being a form of creationism). Most forms of creationism contend that an intelligence, not natural processes, created the universe and all life. However, only young-earth creationism is supported by a straightforward reading of Genesis without introducing outside suppositions and beliefs foreign to the text (e.g., that “science” has proven the ancient age of the earth).

Based upon the Biblical account, there are seven main tenets (the “7 C’s”) of young-earth creationism: 1) the triune

God of the Bible *created* the earth, the universe, and all life around 6,000 years ago (some allow for a range of 6,000-10,000 years old); 2) humanity rebelled against God, and God removed some of His sustaining power, which led to death and suffering (the *Curse*); 3) a year-long global *catastrophe* (the worldwide Flood) 4,000-5,000 years ago destroyed all land life not aboard Noah’s Ark and much of the sea life (evidenced by the fossil record); 4) God judged humanity by causing a *confusion* of languages at the Tower of Babel, giving rise to the various people groups around the world; 5) *Jesus Christ* (God made flesh) was conceived by the Holy Spirit and physically born of a virgin over 2,000 years ago; 6) Christ died on the *Cross* and rose to life again to make a way for humanity to be restored to God; and 7) Christ will one day return to judge the earth (the *consummation*).

Creationism, like evolutionism (or naturalism), is an interpretive framework through which all data is processed. Both are based upon beliefs about the past and past events, but only one, creationism, relies upon an eyewitness account. Attempts to place naturalism outside the realm of belief are untenable.

The terms *creationism* and *creationist*

are often used to distinguish those who do not accept naturalism as a valid explanation for how the universe and life came to be. However, creationism (specifically, young-earth creationism) entails a wide range of fields, including geology, biology, astronomy, physics, theology, etc., and is not a scientific or theological discipline in and of itself. Instead, it is a Biblically based framework through which all data is interpreted.

Contrary to popular belief, science is not naturalism (the belief that life and the universe were not created, but came about by non-teleological processes). In fact, many of the earliest Western scientists were creationists and relied upon their belief in God and the Bible to aid their research, and many creationist scientists today successfully experiment and make important discoveries (e.g., the MRI).

Science is a tool that is used to discover data about the universe. While science can uncover much about how the

universe works in the present, neither science nor the data uncovered through the scientific method can independently provide knowledge about the past. Instead, science concerned with origins and past events (historical science) depends upon the researcher's existing beliefs and framework.

Creationists base all of their research and conclusions upon the Biblical record. In other words, nothing in science (or any field) makes sense except in light of God's Word. Where the Bible does not give specifics, creationists form hypotheses and models that accord with what the Bible teaches about the world and test these hypotheses against present data. Thus, hypotheses can be discarded, but the Biblical record is not. Although this is often a point of derision, evolutionists rely upon the same methodology: that is, while hypotheses are discarded, the belief in evolution is never questioned. ■

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 **Book Review . . .**

by Rosalind J. Byler

## Voices of the True Woman

Author: Nancy Leigh DeMoss

Publisher: Moody Publishers, 2010.

218 pp.

Available from: *Barnes & Noble, Borders, CBD, and Target*

Another book on Biblical womanhood? As Anabaptists, we may consider ourselves to be somewhat removed from the effects of the feminist movement and its damaging worldview. We might look with astonishment at the fast-growing number of books written by evangelical Christians on the subject of Biblical womanhood, thinking it looks like

answers to questions we have not asked. We would do well to ask questions and to seek Biblical answers, for the ideology of feminism has so thoroughly infected our world that we cannot hope to avoid its influence.

*Voices of the True Woman* is a recently-published collection of messages presented at a conference designed to affirm God's purpose for the lives of women. It is not, as the compiler makes clear, a comprehensive explanation of Biblical womanhood, but rather a forum for "voices" that speak truth about it.

**PAGE 28**

**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

Many of the insistent voices heard by women today are “loud and seductive” and communicate folly; this book represents the heart of a counter-cultural movement submitted to the authority of the Word of God.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss is the compiler and shares more than one chapter, but there are several other contributing speakers. Four main sections cover “Foundations of True Womanhood”; “The Battle for True Womanhood”; “The Refining of True Womanhood”; and “Reclaiming True Womanhood.” While there is some overlap in the teaching in the four sections, I found it helpful to consider the material from the perspectives suggested. A “Going Deeper” guide is provided near the end of the book with ideas for small-group study.

An important point made in the opening chapter is that our theology will affect the type of women we become. John Piper’s thesis states that true womanhood is “a distinctive calling of God to display the glory of His Son in ways that would not be displayed if there were no womanhood.” While I did not find the style and content of this chapter as challenging as the chapters that followed, there were still some good applications of truth for both married and single women—each of whom is equipped to serve God in ways that the other cannot.

After defining true womanhood, Section 2 presents examples of cultural opposition to a Biblical view of woman’s roles. Beginning with the 1950s, Mary Kassian demonstrates from the media of the day how the feminist philosophy developed in America and integrated itself into our culture. It was aided by a worldwide mindset of revolution: equal rights were being demanded with fervor by oppressed classes, workers, college students, and blacks. Feminist ideology had been around since at least the 1800s, and it didn’t take much for modern writers Simone de Beauvoir and Betty

Friedan to touch off a gender revolution. Women quickly moved from redefining women to attempting to rename the world and eventually even God. The chapter that follows shows how God used a “true woman” from Bible times (in a culture of genuine oppression) to accomplish His will. Nancy Leigh DeMoss skillfully presents hope and perspective for modern times using the story of Esther.

The third section illustrates the “refining” of several women through suffering. We are all familiar with Hannah’s pain over being barren in a time when sons were everything; Janet Parshall elaborates on her story. Karen Loritts shares her own experience of an unexpected emotional breakdown about the time she became an “empty-nester.” Joni Eareckson Tada talks about the pain and privileges of her quadriplegic condition and how she has been “polished” as a result of suffering.

Section 4 encourages us to reclaim true womanhood through prayer and through “counterrevolution.” Don’t even begin to picture yourself marching outside the White House and speaking at women’s rallies; this is a revolution of mindset and quiet action. The closing chapters include the “True Woman Manifesto,” which sounds unpleasantly militant but is merely a statement of belief; a rationale for having such a statement of belief, by Mary Kassian; and a prayer for true women, by John Piper. While I prefer spontaneous prayers to pre-prayed ones, I was challenged by his mention of needs and requests I would not have thought of—some of which are now part of my personal prayers.

As with any mainstream evangelical book, this one assumes perspectives on adornment that we would not share. I found the book sufficiently sound and Scriptural otherwise to recommend it for any woman who wishes to begin realigning her thinking patterns with God’s Word! ■

# Tutoring Your Successor

by Richard Shank

Let's face it. About 90% of all new businesses fail within a few years of start-up. Of the 10% who succeed, only 30% of these survive more than a few years after the original owner is no longer active in the business. Do the math. The numbers are very discouraging, but your business doesn't need to be included in these statistical failures, if you take the right precautions far in advance of retirement. And that means beginning with a good tutoring plan today, even if you are only 40 years old.

One major reason why small businesses fail is because the owner failed to adequately train his successor. Large businesses have on-going training programs for their employees. They can assign staff to conduct formal training sessions in all of the need-to-know areas, preparing their employees to eventually step up to the next level. But smaller businesses usually lack the resources of training procedures, time, and funds to groom their people in this manner.

So we go to the opposite extreme. We expect our team to develop and learn with "on-the-job" training. Well, that sounds great. Monkey see, monkey do. But there are problems with this training method. Employees observe and learn bad habits and methods as well as good. But perhaps worse, they don't learn the reasons behind why things are done your way. Hopefully you know why you do it your way, but do your employees understand? To further complicate the situation, we owners sometimes act erratically. We do it one way on this job, but another way on the next. We may not be consistent on almost identical jobs. But tutoring is so critical that we must find a way to do it correctly.

Let's begin by thinking about what your eventual successor will need to know about your business in order to continue or sur-

pass your achievements.

For example, how to price the products or services you offer. Yes, we sometimes need to "wing it," but that method is fraught with danger. To be successful, you understand that you must know your true cost, your overhead factor, and what constitutes a realistic profit goal. There are other reasons; the competition, the risks, your capabilities, and the availability of time and resources. Availability of labor determines if you will be required to pay overtime rates in order to complete the prospective job in a timely manner.

Another biggie is major purchasing decisions. When faced with deciding between three brands, what thought process do you use to make an excellent buying decision for your business requirements? Maybe you never learned the proper way, but that fact shouldn't stop you from learning a proper way today, while your apprentice sits beside you.

After you finish the work, what steps do you take to collect your money? Actually that is the wrong way to do it. A good collection process begins before you have a signed contract. Really it does. But regardless if you've done everything you should have done to assure payment, we know that not everyone is waiting checkbook in hand the moment the work is completed. So what do you do to collect? The person you are tutoring as your eventual successor needs to know. And please, don't say you don't understand these things either, unless you are willing to take the necessary steps to stop your bad habits and learn good ones.

The day is long gone for most of us in which we can travel home by telling Sam to "giddy up" at the end of the day, and good horse Sam will take us safely home. Financial traveling is the same. The methods our parents or grandparents used in managing

the financial aspects of a business won't usually work today. We need to have a working knowledge of financial statements, and how to use them in making business decisions. Profit & Loss reports, Balance Sheets, Percentages, Cash Flow projections, and Ratios are important tools that you must know how to understand and use. Yes, I recognize that some folks may have a financially successful business without bothering with these crutches, but even those businesses could improve by having and using the right tools.

There are many more "courses" you need to teach in addition to the above. If you are sincere about wanting your business to continue after you retire, begin by making a list of all of the issues your successor would need to know if your funeral is tomorrow. And then begin a systematical tutoring plan now.

You may ask, "But what steps should I take in tutoring? I'm just a simple carpenter." Simple or no, you have the ability to effect the necessary tutoring. ■

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## Where Is Your Treasure?

by Joshua Strickler

We can say it many ways, "My heart follows its treasure, or, the things I value give me hope." "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). I want the thrust of this article to point us in the direction of evaluating the places where we stake our hope. At bottom, what is it that has my affection? What does the way I'm living say about the thing on which I fundamentally hang my life and hope? In considering these questions, we'll ponder a principle regarding treasure. First I want to look at Jonah, second at my own heart, and finally a few closing reflections.

Jonah is a man who knows and loves God. When God tells him to go preach to Nineveh, Jonah runs the other way. He later explains, when in the depths of despair, "God, I knew you were a God of compassion and that you would forgive Nineveh. That isn't what I wanted. I hate those awful people who have done such wickedness and I want you to utterly destroy them. So take away my life" (author's paraphrase of Jonah 4). History tells us Jonah has credible and substantial reason to hate the Ninevites. And Jonah's hope was in their destruction. When it doesn't happen, Jonah wants to die. Here's the treasure principle: When you find yourself in despair, start sniffing around for treasure.

It is Friday evening after an incredibly

busy week. I've not been able to finish the many tasks required by Divine Providence. (Can you hear my anger?) In an attempt to dismiss reality, I've been trying to convince myself that I'll finish everything on Saturday. I know this is humanly impossible, but it feels good for the moment to kid myself. I've not talked with my wife all day because I went straight to a family gathering from work. Then we rushed home to wash the dishes and fire off a crazed prayer to satisfy my conscience that we've had family worship and are now permitted to collapse into bed. Saturday doesn't start off well. By 4 p.m. I've managed to begin two of the seventeen tasks that simply had to be finished by nightfall. In this context I begin to listen to the clamor of my soul.

When I listen to the noise within it sounds like, "God, explain this to me. I don't get it. I'm angry and frustrated and I don't want to be. You are nowhere. I can't even get the unimportant things finished so I can have time for the important things. What is the point of all this? Life is not worth living this way." Can you locate the value statement? What is my heart holding up as treasure?

In moments like this I needed a radical reordering of reality. This time it came through a few words from Psalm 39: "My  
(continued on page 23)

# THE TELEVISION: Evil Virus of the 21st Century

by Felipe Yoder, Costa Rica

Statistics tell us that in general, in a home where there is television, the children watch it six hours daily. When they become 16 years old, that child has watched television more hours than a worker who for 12 years, without missing once, has worked forty hours per week.

After sleep and work, the television occupies more time than any other thing in the homes that have it.

Anything that takes up so much of our time should be analyzed well. As Christians, this analysis needs to be made in light of the Word of God and by our responsibility to glorify Him with our time and life. In honesty we want to see what statistics tell us about the influence, the contents, and the effects of the television on those who watch it. Also we need to compare these results with the will of God for His people.

***Its influence.*** The influence of television is strong. Paula Brooks, assistant administrator of the Independent School District communications in Fort Worth, Texas, USA, said like this: "The communication media have become strong forces to influence man. Their penetration cannot be ignored by any institution that is concerned about the effects they leave in the minds and will of its people."

Someone asked Alistaire Cooke, who for many years was a program producer for television: "Of all the influences that affect children, where would you place television?"

He answered: "The place following the parents but before the school and church." He also added: "Bad habits are acquired much faster by television than by any other means."

The English psychologist William A. Belson did a study on 1,565 boys between ages

12 to 17 years. He discovered that in these boys, television did not necessarily change their attitude towards violence, but destroyed the moral values that the home, the church, and the school tried to build. It encouraged and developed the sinful nature while it destroyed any moral teaching.

They say that the human being retains 10% of what he hears, 50% of what he hears and sees, and 90% of what he hears, sees, and does. He who watches television hears, sees, and experiences the feeling of participation which is very similar to doing it. We could conclude that the television watcher retains much more than 50% of what he sees.

The influence of the television is a reality and it is strong. Because of this, it is necessary that the content of its programs be carefully and honestly analyzed. If we watch television, it is impossible to not feel its effects in our lives and in the lives of our children.

***Its content.*** The television broadcasts are there mainly to sell time for commercials. Because of this it is of their highest interest to demand the attention of the greatest number of television watchers. To do this it is needful to have programs that attract the attention of the majority. For this reason, the mentality and desire of the majority is what determines the contents of the programs.

***Humanist philosophy.*** Because the majority of television watchers are not Christians, it is logical that the majority of the programs are not either. Exactly in this exists one of the most subtle and destructive dangers of television. The philosophy of the television programs are humanistic. They do not distinguish clearly between the good and bad. The solutions they offer to

the world's problems are not economic, social, or political. They do not take Christianity into consideration. They teach a mentality that there is no God and that there will be no punishment nor reward. Anyone who continually is under this influence is weakened in his capacity to see from a Christian viewpoint.

**Anti-Christianity.** When the television focuses directly on Christianity, many times it gives a twisted picture. In a study that was made on the effects of television, Kevin Perrotta says he found that the television deals with Christianity basically in three forms. First, that being a Christian is a thing for simple and ignorant people. Second, that it is a racket. Thirdly, that it is a dangerous thing identifying with the occult sects. He continues to say that a person who lets himself be influenced by the television does not want to be a Christian. Without the need of saying it, no true Christian wants himself or his children to be under such influence.

**Violence.** Violence is another thing we need to consider with the contents of the television programs. The University of Pennsylvania, USA, has been studying violence on television for more than 14 years. They say that during the time when the majority of people are watching it, six violent acts per hour are committed on four out of five programs. Statistics also reveal that a youth of sixteen has seen 150,000 violent acts and about 25,000 homicides on television.

The cartoon programs for children are among the most violent ones. They are also among the most tricky ones. Everything happens to make you laugh, but some show up to 25 violent incidents per hour. These programs help to form the mentality of a child. The television watcher who daily is exposed to such violence loses respect for the human life. He accustoms himself to the suffering and wickedness of violence.

More than ten years ago, the Surgeon General of the United States, Jesse L. Steinfeld, said: "The relation between violence on the television and the anti-social behavior of the people deserves immediate action to remedy the situation." But, still today the violence

continues, and the people continue watching.

**Immorality.** The immorality of the television programs is also an alarming subject. Daily the programs are filled with erotic love. In most cases you see marital infidelity and fornication. The attitude that is promoted is that marital fidelity is for the simple and weak. More, it shows a very depraved concept of love. According to television, love is an erotic experience without any responsibility or commitment. In reality it teaches to liberally follow passions and only care about ourselves.

Even the commercials and announcements use sex to sell their products. The dignity of the human being is lost because he is seen only as an object of pleasure. In many cases, people get up from watching television with their desires aroused and search for a way to satisfy them unlawfully.

**Rebellion against age (the old).** The mentality of television is: "Youth is beautiful—age is a disgrace." It avoids age with cosmetics. It adopts the mentality of the young people, lives for pleasure, and to experience passion and happiness. Maturity and seriousness have no room. It makes people deny the fact of death.

**Its effects.** We have already seen that television has much influence. We also looked at some of the contents of its programs. Now we need to consider the effects these have on those who live under such influence. Looking around us, we see a society that is more and more contrary to Christianity. It is a society in which you live for the pleasure of the moment. No thought is made on the consequences of their deeds. We live in a world where violence has reached pre-occupying levels. On every side we see immorality, and marriages broken by illusions of erotic love without responsibility. We ask the question: "Is there a relation between all this and the television?" Yes, there clearly is. Besides, there are other effects which we also need to look at.

**Produces a false image of this world.** The television mostly shows the professional and wealthy people. It shows the persons who live in an opulent society. This

gives the impression that the majority of the world live like this. Because of this, many people develop an inferior complex and discontentment with the situation where they find themselves. It gives the impression that "life is treating me badly." It kills courage and produces jealousy.

**Destroys creativity.** Before the days when television came, children and adults entertained themselves with games, conversations, etc. The mind helped them find ways to occupy their time with valuable things. The television makes the mind lazy. Now people sit down in front of the television and empty their minds, letting the television fill them. It produces passivism and the desire to receive without making an effort.

**Destroys the family and social atmosphere.** The television has stolen the place of communication. Instead of talking and playing together, the family sits around the television and lets it fill their minds while they forget about each other.

When visitors come, they don't have to entertain them, because they don't want to lose the program that is given.

When children have problems or fights, instead of sitting down with them to teach and discipline them, the mother puts them in front of the television, hoping this will make them forget their problem. Such children grow up with two disadvantages. First, they don't receive the needed teaching, and second, they are taught by the television.

Between husband and wife, there is also less communication by reason of the television. Already it is difficult for them to find sufficient time to communicate as they should. When marriage problems arise, the easiest escape is getting in front of the television instead of solving the problems. Often when the wife would like to sit down and enjoy a conversation, the husband does not have time because there is a football game on television.

The television is a very efficient tool in the hands of Satan for the work of the destruction of homes.

**It enslaves.** Watching television becomes an addiction (bad habit). Many

people today find themselves dominated by it. When their favorite program is being shown, they leave whatever they are doing to go see it. They stop going to church if this interferes with the program they want to see. When they don't have the television, they feel lost and bored.

**Destroys the feeling of admiration for reality.** A lady took her children to a circus where they saw a man put his head in a lion's mouth while 14 more tigers threatened him from every side. The children were not at all impressed. After having seen on television the bionic man lift a rock the size of a tractor and throw it aside as though it were a little stone, or seen supermen flying through the roof, or having seen the mummy grab a truck and make as though it were a toy, why would the children be impressed to see a common man stick his head in the mouth of a little lion? After having seen so many lies on television, the feeling of admiration for reality is destroyed. How sad when a person has lost his admiration for the great works of God, and even for the great accomplishments of humanity.

Someone will say: "But there are many good programs." That is true. But even those are interrupted frequently with immoral and foolish commercials.

For Christians, the question is, Can we justify the small amount of good that comes in the midst of the large amount of trash and poison?

A person who looks at the facts in honesty and strives to be a follower of Jesus in truth, will recognize that the television is a tool used by Satan to corrupt humanity, and that it does not belong in a Christian home.

The Bible tells us in Philippians 1:9-11: "That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." ■

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# Sheep Among Wolves

by a Chinese house church leader

*“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves”* (Matthew 10:16). What? Sheep among wolves? Did Christ not know what wolves tend to do to sheep? What will become of the sheep?

Persecution of Christians is nothing new. This has been happening throughout history. The early Christian church was persecuted. We also see persecution of Christians in recent history. *Tortured for Christ* is a well-known book about a Romanian pastor’s imprisonment and tortures for fourteen years under communist regime. This book begins with the pastor’s arrest and initial interrogation. He was accused of spying for the United States against his communist homeland. He was not a spy, but simply a pastor of a church.

Persecution of Christians in China is a fact of life. Let us look first at some history. The Chinese church is a young church. Although the Gospel came to China as early as the seventh century, by a Nestorian missionary, and again in the thirteenth century, it never took deep root. It was only within the past 150 years, with the influx of missionaries, that the seed of the Gospel finally took root in China and sprang up.

Missionaries did a lot of good in China. Besides preaching the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ, which brought new life through regeneration and sanctification, they also did much work through their schools and hospitals. But these missionaries came in during the “Gun Boat Diplomacy” period, when China was oppressed and exploited by western powers. To the Chinese, all foreigners were in one class. As a result, unfortunately, Christianity was often viewed as hostile and as a tool of western imperialism.

When China changed its color to red, meaning Communism, in 1949, a new page

of history began for the young Chinese church. In 1951 all missionaries were driven out of China. The Chinese church was left to stand on her own. Also in the 1950s, serious social revolution took place, and everything—farmland, businesses, personal property, and even the church—came under state control. The Communists established their own church called The Three-Self Government Church. Three-self meant that the church was to self-govern, self-support, and self-propagate. Pastors who would not come under the Three-Self church were persecuted. Their churches were closed, and they were put into prison and sent to hard labor camp. This was only the beginning.

Then came the dreadful Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. This was actually a cover-up for the power struggle that was taking place in the top level of government. Anything associated with western influence or ancient Confucian teaching was to be eliminated. Schools were closed, educated people were imprisoned, and anything valued in previous times was to be despised. The country suffered ten years of chaos and ruins. It sent China backward at the time when other countries were making great strides of progress in science and technology. Christians were persecuted intensely during those ten years of terror. All churches were closed; even the government Three-Self churches were closed and their pastors were thrown into prison.

It was during these hard times that the “house church” movement began. With churches closed, Christians began to meet to worship and fellowship in secret in houses after dark. This movement soon spread like fire. Persecution drove them from village to village and from city to city. The Gospel spread, just like we read about in the Book of Acts: as persecution came,

disciples fled from Jerusalem to Judea, spreading the Word along the way. Also, like in the time of Acts, God confirmed His Word with miracles, especially in areas where the Bible and Christians had never been for a witness. Tens of thousands came to the living faith.

The Cultural Revolution finally came to an end in 1976, as the “Gang of Four,” which included Chairman Mao’s wife Jiang Qing, were taken to prison by Chairman Mao’s appointed successor, Hua Guofeng. Then with the reinstating of Deng Xiaping, China started a new “Economy Revolution,” opening China for trade and commerce with the outside world.

It was a breath of fresh air for China, and for the Chinese church. Persecution eased and churches again were slowly opened. Soon they were filled by the hundreds of thousands who had found their new faith during the reign of terror.

As China opened to the world in the 1980s, new ideas were sweeping the country. Students envisioned a new form of government. They believed it was time to replace the old regime that had brought China to ruins over the past decade. It was springtime across the Iron Curtain region also. Calls for reform swept across the eastern block of Europe, which quickly brought down the Iron Curtain. Communist-controlled countries like Poland and Romania fell one after another.

In 1989, Chinese students gathered at Tiananmen Square in central Beijing, calling for an end to corruption and for reform. They were brutally met with the tanks and guns of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army. The government feared that the Communist power would be overthrown as had happened in the Eastern European block countries. The Chinese government saw that the fall of the Iron Curtain was in some ways affected and supported by the Roman Catholic Church and western powers. China, unfortunately, again saw Christianity as a force of western power to overthrow the government. They decided that Christianity must be stopped at all

costs. Persecution of the church was again ignited overnight. For Christians it became a matter of survival.

House churches, which had enjoyed relative freedom, were banned as illegal. Only the Three-Self church, the official church, was allowed to remain. But by now, the house church Christians were too numerous to stop.

To this day the government still wants to control the house churches. They permit small groups to meet, but they cannot become too large. Usually a group needs to remain under twenty, although the number varies at times. Further, these house church groups are to have no connections to Christian groups outside China. The government fears that they may become tools of western imperial Christianity working against the government.

To ensure that the church will serve the government interest, the Three-Self church adopted a new line of liberal theology. It distorts the Scripture to promote “justification by love.” A person is saved as long as he loves the country, the communist party, and the people. They use the verse in 1 Corinthians 13: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity . . . but the greatest of these is charity.” Those who do not follow the party line will not be given the permit to preach. The Three-Self church dogma also denies miracles and condemns them as unscientific. They reduce the glory of the Gospel to dust, claiming that Christ’s resurrection is only a spiritual resurrection and His teachings live on much like those of Buddha, Confucius, and other great men of history. The official Three-Self theological position denies a bodily resurrection of Christ. These are the reasons why many refuse to go along with the government program, even if it means persecution. They will not bow the knee to Baal.

But as China opens to the world, the government becomes concerned of presenting a good image. They need a good image for trade and international business. Persecution now has taken another form. Instead of direct attacks, confrontation, and imprisonment—which still does happen, but no