

The SWORD and TRUMPET



"Blow ye the Trumpet and warn the People."

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

"Take the Sword of the Spirit which is The Word of God."

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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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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Peace at Any Price

by Dr. V. R. Edman

Inherent in human nature is the fallacy that freedom from pressures and problems always serves our own best interests. We rationalize that what decisions are made nationally or internationally really do not matter to us so long as our own individual world is undisturbed. Many issues are difficult to determine rightly anyway, we say; the important thing is to avoid stress.

The same philosophy is often seen in the family. Children are undisciplined because it seems easier to let naughtiness and disobedience pass.

Pontius Pilate is a prime example of this fatal and fatalistic fallacy. He is one of the most pitiable figures appearing on the pages of history. For the sake of peace he sacrificed an innocent Man. Because he desired to secure his own position he flouted justice and gave way to pressure from the mob. However, historians say Pilate fell into disrepute not long after the infamous trial of Jesus Christ and committed suicide.

The proponent of peace at any price cries: "Let me alone; let no strife excite me nor enmity disturb me; let there be no discord, please." Friendly relations, whatever that means, are more important to such "peacemakers" than honor or honesty.

The Saviour taught, "Blessed are the peacemakers," and the emphasis should be on the latter half of that word, **makers**. Constructive attitudes and conscientious effort are needed to establish and maintain a basis for true peace. The courage of convictions is important and imperative. The fearful and falsehearted are not makers of peace, they destroy it.

We are taught to live, as far as possible, at peace with all men. The Scriptures recognize the boundaries of such possibilities. We are to seek peaceful means in solving problems. Such procedures can be effective only when based on right principles.

Pilate actually had only one problem to face: Was the prisoner before him guilty or

innocent? If innocent, then there was no case to be considered. Pilate vacillated. He did not want the responsibility of passing judgment on Christ. When he learned that Jesus was a Galilean he gladly sent the prisoner to Herod. But the attempt to evade responsibility failed, and a distraught Pilate received Him back again.

Pilate was not considered a bad man, nor would he be so regarded today. He was just a governor in a most unfortunate circumstance trying to keep the peace at all cost. He wanted to please the people under his jurisdiction, stay on the good side of their leaders, the priests, and protect his own interests. Why protect one man, though innocent, against a howling mob of fanatics? The uproar was about to get out of hand. Let the people be responsible. And so "the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed."

But can there be tranquility at the expense of trustworthiness? Is peace established by partiality or perfidy? Can there be harmony on the basis of dishonesty, or the cessation of strife by inconstancy? Are personal position and prestige ever bolstered by the releasing of any Barabbas? Is the respect of critics ever secured by the compromise of conscience? Are respect and integrity confirmed by "the washing of hands"?

If in the face of opposition I retreat from what is right am I following the example of the Saviour or am I compromising my conscience as did Pilate? Should I as an affectionate parent let my children do as they please even though the Scriptures warn that a child left to himself brings shame—"a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him"? Can I relinquish this responsibility for child training to the school or the church?

Should the government let the mobs riot in the streets and ransack private property? Should public-spirited citizens not support the police as the constituted authorities to maintain the rights of all?

(continued on page 33)

Person of the Month:

Sam Jones
(1847-1906)



“A good mother is the greatest blessing ever bestowed on a family of children; and a godless, wicked, worldly mother is the greatest curse that ever blighted a home!”

Sam Jones, a drunken ex-lawyer and ex-schoolteacher who got converted at the age of 24, went on to become the greatest Methodist evangelist since the Wesleys, and one of the greatest Gospel preachers of all time.

Samuel Porter Jones was born in 1847 in Oak Bowrey, Alabama; his family moved to Cartersville, Georgia, when he was nine. Showing promise as a young man, Jones studied law after graduation and was admitted to the Georgia bar in 1868. However, he began to drink heavily and almost destroyed his career and his marriage. When his father, on his deathbed, pled with Sam to become a Christian, Jones quit drinking and was converted.

He set out to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ in 1872. And what a preacher he became! God made but one Sam Jones; no other American evangelist ever used his methods or his language. Troubadour to plain folks, he came out of the South with a vernacular that startled audiences everywhere and shocked them into salvation. He was called “the South’s greatest spokesman for God.”

No man ever yawned under his preaching. He had a devastating wit and humor, a pet hate for liquor, and an undismayed love for God and man. He blasted the hypocrite mercilessly; he made the sinner—be he prince, drunkard, or any careless Christian—see himself as God sees him, and change his ways.

He often turned his homiletic guns on church folk and even on preachers, and they were better Christians for it. Blunt and frank as Billy Sunday, he had the humility of his small-town Georgia and the impact of a consecrated cyclone; no town was ever the same once he had passed through.

Will this earth ever hear again the voice or throb of another like him?

When Sam Jones died of heart failure on a train at Perry, Arkansas, October 15, 1906, America lost a prince among evangelists.

—Reprinted with permission from *Sword of the Lord Publishers*, www.swordofthelord.com.

“The Kingdom of God Is Not Meat and Drink”

by Edward Ker, Jr.

The early church struggled to reconcile the differences of combined Jew and Gentile converts on issues as simple as their diet. The Jewish believers tended to revert to the ceremonial laws and ordinances pertaining to unclean meats and felt that to disregard the feast days violated God’s law. The Gentiles felt no obligation to observe such ordinances that had been done away in Christ.

On the other hand, the Gentile converts that had turned to God from idols associated the eating of meats offered to idols with their former pagan rites and worship. The Jews could eat such meat with a clear conscience since they knew that an idol was nothing. Paul shared a principle that clarified their discussion. “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17).

What Bible principles direct our response to variations in background, culture, and frame of reference on matters as simple as what we eat? And how are these differences blended in Christian brotherhood!

“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye” (Romans 14:1). We are wise to focus on spiritual issues and extend latitude on debatable issues. We should not impose our personal opinions on the consciences of others.

“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10). Since we are not the final judges, we should use care in our judgment.

“Let not then your good be evil spoken of” (Romans 14:16). The blending of vari-

ous personalities and viewpoints in the Christian brotherhood has potential for dissension and consequent reproach upon our Lord. The Word of God, group conscience, and personal conscience each have their own place in church life but in the order stated. Personal preference or opinion is on an even lower level. When one attempts to assert personal preference into the God-ordained order of authority, truth is hindered, the vitality of the brotherhood is threatened, and reproach falls upon the testimony of Christ. Unbelievers, as well as some within the church, are disillusioned.

These principles direct us in issues of meat and drink that the church faces today. One of the current trends of society is an emphasis on healthy food. Food producers have found a market niche in supplying organic and naturally produced foods. Is this trend simply a personal preference, or does it carry deeper implications that affect our view of life and the earth?

We are commanded to be good stewards of the bodies God gave us. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). A good variety of ordinary food is generally sufficient for the maintenance of our bodies and the performance of our daily duties. Overeating any type of food can damage our health and may indicate intemperance.

On the other hand, we may overemphasize bodily health. This may reveal a misunderstanding of life itself. “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or

that” (James 4:14, 15). This does not indicate a fatalistic outlook, but rather states the divine view of mortal life. These bodies are fragile at best. Promoting a specific physical diet as necessary for long life or salvation is adding to the written Word.

We should not promote health issues to the point that we ruin relationships with others by imposing our opinions on them. Advocating debatable health remedies with religious fervor reveals misplaced priorities. Some have become self-proclaimed authorities, offering cures for anything from the common flu to depression to cancer.

What may indicate that an interest in health has gotten out of place? Do natural food advisers have more authority in my choices than the brotherhood voice? Our fellowship should be among the saints. Do I need certain products regardless of the cost? Many health items are lucrative revenue for their distributors. Do I believe that my life will be lengthened significantly by using certain products? “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth” (Psalm 103:15). Certain special diets have not been proven to lengthen life significantly.

We do well to consider the worldview of a movement. Although we may participate in organic projects and even appreciate the concepts of natural food production, we must beware of erroneous philosophies. Many in the organic farming movement overemphasize the preservation of the earth. Some are affected by pantheistic philosophy and “[worship] and [serve] the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). To many in society, “mother earth” is a god that must be preserved at any cost.

While it is clearly evident that misusing chemicals can damage the creation and destroy life, discreet use can greatly increase the production of food. We should not be party to the anti-establishment attitude promulgated by some toward corporations and the government departments that regulate them.

Sin is the greatest cause of the creation’s deterioration. The earth will con-

tinue to wax old under the curse of sin until the Redeemer brings in “the times of restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21). For man to think that he can restore this earth to its pristine condition is folly.

Do I support movements with an established history? How often has my opinion been swayed by a new product or concept? To wait five or ten years to test a concept and avoid the snare of being a gullible fool is wise. Fads of quackery change every few years.

Our energies and time are best invested in the eternal kingdom rather than the temporal earth. “The kingdom of God is . . . righteousness.” Since God cannot change, He changes sinners. Perfect spiritual health is found by repentance and faith in the shed blood of Christ.

“The kingdom of God is . . . peace.” Christ calls us to lay down our personal agendas to blend our practice with our brethren’s convictions.

“The kingdom of God is . . . joy in the Holy Ghost.” The Spirit brings the joy of Gospel harmony to the brotherhood. When we yield to God and one another, the church can flourish. How much sorrow have we suffered because we have failed to take the path of true joy?

As we serve our Lord in righteousness, peace, and joy, we will enjoy God’s blessing. Our life will also adorn our profession among men. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*, January 2011.



LORD, IF YOU WILL . . . cont'd. from p. 4

“Lord, if You will, You can make me clean?” It is only when we recognize our own sinfulness and are truly clean before God that we will be willing and able to offer His compassion and cleansing to those around us. Will you join me to pray, “Lord, if You will . . .”? ■

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From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

“Lord, If You Will . . .”

by J. Mark Horst

*I*magine spending your life as a social and religious outcast in a society that places great value on religion. Can't relate? Neither can I! But recently, I read the opening verses of Matthew 8 where a leper says to Jesus, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.”

This man was reminded of his “uncleanness” every day! Forced to live separately from loved ones and to announce his presence to warn passersby of his condition, he knew very well the stigma of being held at arm's length and beyond. None dared touch him for fear of contracting his dread disease!

But he came to Jesus and worshipped Him. He saw in Jesus something he didn't see in other people, and especially religious people—compassion. What he saw strengthened his faith and motivated him to ask for healing. He had nothing to lose if Jesus refused to heal him. If, however, Jesus chose to heal him, his life would change dramatically!

In response to his appeal, Jesus put out His hand and did the unthinkable—He touched him and said, “I will, be clean.”

Jesus could have healed him with the words. But He demonstrated compassion and acceptance by violating cultural and religious taboos of touching the man! Our Saviour seemed to delight in doing the unconventional.

Today, there are many “untouchables” around you and me. In the eyes of religious people they are sinners of the worst sort: drunkards, drug addicts, serial adulterers, and so on. They don't go around announcing themselves as unclean but their dress (or lack of it), their spiked hair in rainbow colors, their body piercings, their vacant stares, and their (to us) obnoxious music, all give evidence of their need of a compassionate touch from Jesus. Since He is no longer here in the body, it is our hands that must provide that touch.

Are you and I willing to step out of our comfort zone? Are we willing to acknowledge our attitudes of spiritual superiority and pride? Are we willing to be the hands of Jesus to touch the untouchables of our day? Are we, first of all, willing to say,

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

NOVEMBER 6, 2011

True Righteousness

Matthew 5:17-26

We continue our study in the Sermon on the Mount with Jesus' teaching on what constitutes true righteousness. He first declares the permanence of God's Law, and then describes the seriousness of breaking that Law. He then goes on to show that true righteousness is a matter of the heart and not in doing or refraining from doing certain things. For those hearing Jesus, He was taking the matter of righteousness to an entirely new level. These principles are part of the manifesto of His kingdom.

Jesus declared that it was not His intention to abolish or belittle the Law, but rather to flesh out its principles, to show how that Law was intended to work in everyday relationships. One's relationship to the Law declared his standing in God's kingdom. Those who disregard its principles are not worthy of the kingdom, but those who observe the Law and teach others to observe it are to be considered worthy.

Jesus had continual conflict with the Pharisees throughout His ministry. They were intent on keeping the minutiae of the Law. He looked at heart attitudes. And that is where He based true righteousness, the attitude behind the action and the maintaining of right relationships man to man. Entrance into God's kingdom was not based on flawless, cold observance of the Law, but on a heart response to God and one's fellowmen.

Jesus went on to explain the intent of the Law. It was not enough to just not

physically kill another, but to not even harbor anger toward him. Those who defamed or insulted another were also worthy of judgment even though they did no physical harm.

Interpersonal relationships are so important, Jesus said, that any conflict between men must be mended before one can properly worship God. One cannot expect acceptance or approval by a holy God when he is at odds with a fellowman. Purity in human relationships is necessary to having a right relationship with God.

Do you find yourself in a quarrel with another? Jesus says, resolve it quickly and amicably. If your dispute ends up before a judge it may cause undue hardship and suffering. Let the law of love and mutual respect override seeking for justice. The results will be far more pleasing.

Jesus was turning the common understanding of the Law on its head. He was showing that true righteousness was a matter of the heart, not in the observance of a set of rules. It is little wonder that at the close of this message "the people were astonished at his doctrine." His teaching was clear, concise, and to the point: a proper relationship to God and one's fellowmen forms the basis for true righteousness.

For thought and discussion

1. Jesus came to fulfill the Law, not to do away with it. Be sure you understand His relationship to the Law. Discuss.
2. What confidence does it give us to know that the principles of God's Law are unchanging?
3. Why did the righteousness of the Pharisees fall short of God's desires? What prompts a Pharisaical righteousness?

4. Why is it so crucial to maintain proper human relationships? Why is it so hard? Discuss.
5. In your own words define true righteousness. Perhaps some class discussion on this.

Lesson emphasis: The meaning and route to true righteousness.

Key verse: 20

NOVEMBER 13, 2011

The Law of Love

Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus continues His teaching here in the Sermon on the Mount, setting in juxtaposition the demands of the Law with the requirements of His kingdom based on love and respect. The Law was harsh and strict in its demands—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. It was based on equal retribution, not love and mercy. Jesus came to change that by changing men's hearts by the infusion of love and respect into the thinking pattern of men's hearts and minds.

Jesus' teaching was a radical departure from the religious teachers of His day. It confounded their message and undercut their authority. However, the common people heard Him gladly for they saw in His teaching heart-changing principles which could radically change society by focusing on relationships instead of the strict do's and don'ts of the Law.

Jesus prefaced His teaching here (see also verses 27-42) with reference to what the Law dictated, then offered His interpretation and explanation with a love-motivated application of that Law. As Jesus noted in verses 46 and 47, it takes no special effort to return love to those who show love toward us. It is the normal human reaction. Even non-Christians show reciprocal respect to their fellows.

But, Jesus says, if you want truly to be a child of God your responses must go far beyond a love-for-love attitude. God's true

child, one formed after His character, will love both friend and foe. This love is a self-giving love, one that takes no thought for reciprocation, but gives freely and selflessly. Just as God showers blessings upon the just and unjust, we, too, should show no discrimination in our love responses.

Jesus takes this love response out of the theoretical and makes it very practical. This love is to be demonstrated by blessing those who curse us, doing good to those who choose to hate us, and praying for those who persecute and spitefully use us. That goes against human nature and is possible only from a nature transformed by God's love.

Not only does this love speak to our enemies, our persecutors, it also speaks to the larger, onlooking community as a vivid demonstration of God's power to transform lives. It is so out of the ordinary that it attracts attention and serves as a witness to God's greatness.

God alone is perfect. However, as His children seek to live out the principles of His divine law, they are to emulate His perfection in their drive for completeness and maturity. Let the law of love rule your heart and you will be known as a child of God.

For thought and discussion

1. Contrast the law of love with the law of retaliation. Which is the easier route? Why? Discuss.
2. What are some practical ways we can do good to those who have harmed us in some way? Discuss.
3. How does verse 45b help us gain perspective on the law of love?
4. Perhaps you or someone in your class has had the experience of seeing good come from evil. Would you or they like to share it?
5. What are the steps to achieving Christian maturity? Good for discussion.

Lesson emphasis: That Godlike agape love is the key to all relationships—with God and with man.

Key verse: 48

NOVEMBER 20, 2011

God's People at Prayer

Matthew 6:5-15

In this first part of Chapter 6, Jesus focuses His teaching on proper motives: in almsgiving (verses 1-4), prayer (our text), and fasting (verses 16-18 following our text verses). It is so easy to allow the worthy expressions of our righteousness to be from wrong motives. Jesus called attention to this elsewhere in His teaching, condemning it as unworthy of one who claimed to follow Him (see Luke 18:9-14; Matthew 23:5).

Jesus assumes here in verse 5 that prayer will be a part of the child of God's worship. He wants His listeners to do it with proper motives, as a private conversation with the Father, not in a manner to draw attention to oneself. That, He says, is the way hypocrites pray, to be seen of man, to draw attention to their professed piety. Jesus says that is hollow and meaningless. The only reward for such prayer is the fact that men will regard and praise their religiosity.

Proper prayer, Jesus says, is done in secret, to the Father. Such praying is rewarded by the Father, which is of so much more and lasting value than the fleeting gaze and praise of man. Jesus also cautions against vain words. Our prayers should be direct, concise, and heartfelt. God is not impressed with long, wordy prayers (see prophets of Baal, 1 Kings 18).

We note in Luke 11:1 that Jesus gave this model prayer in response to a request by a disciple for instruction in praying. Here in Matthew it is included in His teaching on proper motives in the expressions of worship. This prayer is to serve as a model, not as a formula for praying. It speaks to two broad areas—God's Kingdom and man's needs.

Our prayers are to be directed to our benevolent Father in Heaven whose

name is to be held in reverence. We submit our will and desires to His sovereignty, requesting His will to be accomplished here on earth as it is in Heaven.

After acknowledging the sovereignty of God we are instructed to ask for daily bread. This request includes man's needs in all areas of life, but not his wants. God supplies needs, but is not open to selfish requests.

In seeking God's forgiveness for our failures, we acknowledge that we are freely forgiving of those who have wronged us. In fact, God cannot otherwise act on our request. Jesus states very clearly in verses 14 and 15 that our forgiveness by God rests upon the forgiveness we extend to our fellowmen.

Our prayer should also include the request to be kept from severe testing and to escape the clutches of the evil one. This throws our dependence fully upon God. Of ourselves we are weak. Only He is able to protect us.

We close our prayer in recognition of God's sovereignty, His power, and His glory. So let it be, forever. Amen.

For thought and discussion

1. Contrast the prayer of the hypocrite with that of the humble child of God. What are the defining elements? Which is effective? Why?
2. Where are long prayers most appropriate, and is it alright to ask for things over and over?
3. If our heavenly Father knows our needs, why ask? Discuss.
4. What is the danger of simply reciting the Lord's Prayer? Discuss.
5. Why is God's forgiveness of us conditional on our forgiveness of our fellowman? Think clearly on this. What does this tell us about the importance of a forgiving attitude?

Lesson emphasis: Proper motives in prayer.

Key verse: 5

NOVEMBER 27, 2011

The Worry-Free Life

Matthew 6:25-34

Jesus had just told His followers (last Sunday's lesson), that our heavenly Father is aware of all our needs. Nevertheless, in humble recognition of His providential care we are instructed to ask Him to provide the basic necessities of life. In today's passage He instructs us to live without worry or fear of our basic needs not being met. Man's worth is contrasted with the birds for which God cares and for which He provides. Will He not then care for His higher creation, man, created in His own image?

Jesus does not mean we should be lazy or careless in regard to life's necessities. He means we should have no anxious worry that detracts from the greater issues of life. God provides for the birds, but they must seek and gather that food for themselves. So must we. But, as Jesus stresses, there are issues of life that far exceed our need for food and clothing.

Jesus assures us that worry cannot increase our life span. In fact, it may well shorten it. Just as a benevolent God clothes with beauty the flowers of the field, so He will also provide raiment for man. To not trust God is disbelief, and disbelief is sin. So, don't worry. God will care for His children as He cares for the birds.

The frenzied search to provide for oneself is a mark of those who are not acquainted with our benevolent God. They know no heavenly provider. But we, His children, rest in the assurance that He understands our situation and knows our needs. In fact, as we noted in verse 8, His awareness precedes our asking. That should give us great confidence in approaching Him with our needs and desires.

Instead of an overweening concern over food and clothes, which our benevo-

lent heavenly Father has promised to provide, Jesus says our energies should rather be directed toward the growth and advancement of God's Kingdom. Just as we have prayed for that Kingdom to come (verse 10), so we should be working to exemplify and promote the principles of that Kingdom instead of fretting over the cares of life.

In keeping with the Father's promise, and as a reward for our commitment and diligence, Jesus says, these necessary things will be supplied to us as we give of ourselves and our time to building the Kingdom of God.

Jesus also tells us not to borrow trouble. Live fully for today, banish anxious care, put your trust in the heavenly Provider. Tomorrow will have its own set of issues and problems to deal with, and God's grace will still be available.

These principles are the key to a worry-free life. Trust God, He will provide.

For thought and discussion

1. What are some practical out-workings of the principles in this passage? How do we put them to practice in daily life? Discuss.
2. What are the effects of worry on our lives?
3. What has been your experience of God's providential care? Class sharing.
4. What is the balance between our necessary work, and service in God's kingdom?
5. To what extent does God add blessings to our lives in exchange for our sacrificial work for His Kingdom? Discuss.
6. How do we achieve balance between "taking no thought for the morrow" and our obligation to provide for our household? Discuss.

Lesson emphasis: The key to worry-free living and total contentment in life is found in submission and obedience to God.

Key verse: 33

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

Contextualization and Syncretism: Gospel and Culture

Following are excerpts from an article. I don't necessarily agree with the extremes that the article goes to. However, these are issues we need to carefully consider and I think reading this article, which relates news of how this is unfolding, is a helpful context in which to consider these issues. On one hand, we (simply as Westerners, but also as conservative Mennonites) often add a lot to the simplicity of the Gospel. On the other hand, the syncretism (mixing of religions) that the Catholic church has engaged in over the years has been very destructive.

We are not supposed to judge newborn believers as they seek to follow Christ in their culture, but we are called to disciple them. That's what I hope reading this article stimulates in us. I hope we will ponder and pray over some of these scenarios and seek to discover what Jesus thinks about various levels of cultural integration and contextualization.

Contextualization is a subject that we conservative Mennonites especially need to prayerfully ponder. We've observed with sadness when Mennonite culture has been exported wholesale as an essential part of the Gospel and we recognize that as wrong. However, we need to make sure we don't end up in the other ditch as well. Current events reveal elements of the emergent church ending up without Biblical authority and in universalism. We should avoid both ditches of cultural imperialism and universalism. We know that in theory, but hopefully reading this will help stimulate us into putting that theory into more practical terms as we work to help our missionaries work through these issues.

"It's a growing global phenomenon: the rise of indigenous 'Jesus movements' in the

Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist parts of the world, and among Jewish communities and tribal cultures. Many people come to faith in Jesus and start following Him, but choose to remain within the cultural contexts of their birth. They don't convert to (western) Christianity and churches, but form small groups that often multiply and develop into a movement.

"An inspiring example are the Jesus' followers within Judaism. 'Increasing numbers of Jews are learning to follow Jesus faithfully and form small groups for fellowship, but stay within their traditional synagogue communities,' says Gavriel Gefen, who is part of this grassroots movement in Israel. He recently also visited a movement initiated by a Muslim follower of Jesus who is a tribal chief. 'This movement has since spread throughout his country and beyond. During my visit, I met a number of Muslim religious leaders who are fervently devoted to Jesus. I also witnessed some of them teaching publicly about the forgiveness of Jesus to large groups. It was very powerful.'

"One Muslim training center I visited had thousands of men. One of the senior teachers there follows Jesus and teaches openly about Him every day. He is so traditional that it is understood he is not seeking to convert anyone to Christianity. He is challenging them to reclaim Jesus as the Word of God, the renewer of their faith, and the One without whom their people have no hope. The vast majority of Muslims in that training center do not follow Jesus; yet, a good number of them do and also serve in village mosques throughout the region. During my visit, a number of men returning from their service in different villages shared reports with each other. They had been teaching about the forgiveness of Jesus. In some of these villages, those who have accepted

Jesus now meet together in small groups.’
“It was clear that these men know Jesus in all His fullness,’ reports Gefen. ‘The testimony of their lives is not one of compromise. It is not their objective to avoid persecution. The way they live out their faith is not an easier, less authentic way, as some people might accuse. Rather, their path of following Jesus is a harder one and a higher one. By remaining within Islam, they are not seeking acceptance for themselves. They seek to express to their people that Jesus accepts them right where they are, and that they can faithfully follow Him within their community and their family of birth.’

“When a Jesus’ movement like this is born within another culture, the believers there will go through their own process of confronting their culture with the message of Jesus,’ explains Gefen. ‘There will be some cultural expressions and traditions in which they can rightly continue only by redirecting the focus and giving them new meaning. In this process of renewing their culture, they may discover that there are some cultural expressions in which they can no longer engage as followers of Jesus. I believe that the message of Jesus was never intended to be spread by means of cultural conquest. I am convinced that Jesus’ message will increasingly spread among peoples of other faith traditions only as God’s kingdom grows like yeast from within.’

“John Ridgway, an international consultant to pioneer missions organizations, explains that this is a basic missionary principle: ‘Our tendency has often been to draw individuals out of their family and community and ask them to join another community that professes Christianity, rather than to disciple them in their own context where they can reach their own family members, relatives, friends, and work colleagues.’

“Jesus and Paul modeled this kind of indigenous mission and ministered to people right where they were. ‘If the Samaritan woman had been extracted out of her own community, it is doubtful that such an impact (many Samaritans started following Jesus) would have occurred.’”

—Excerpts from “Global: The rise of indigenous ‘Jesus movements’” in *Joel News International* #784, reprinted with permission.

* * * * *

2.7% Made in China

The *LA Times* writes, “Convinced that everything you buy these days has a Made-in-China label?

“Then you aren’t paying attention. Things made in the U.S.A. still dominate the American marketplace, according to a new study by economists at the San Francisco Federal Reserve.

“Goods and services from China accounted for only 2.7% of U.S. personal consumption spending in 2010, according to the report titled ‘*The U.S. Content of “Made in China.”*’ About 88.5% of U.S. spending last year was on American-made products and services.

“Although globalization is widely recognized these days, the U. S. economy actually remains relatively closed,’ economist Galina Hale and researcher Bart Hobijn wrote in the report. ‘The vast majority of goods and services sold in the U. S. is produced here.’

“Furthermore, even for those items ‘Made in China,’ most of the cost of the item goes to services (transportation, store staff, marketing, etc.) produced by Americans.”

LAT writes further, “On average, of every dollar spent on an item labeled ‘Made in China,’ 55 cents goes for services produced in the United States.”

—Excerpt from “Sticker shock: ‘Made in China’ ranks only 2.7% of U.S. Spending” in the *Los Angeles Times*

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News Snippets

One hundred+ CEOs led by Starbucks’ CEO Howard Schultz have vowed no more political donations until they “stop the partisan gridlock in Washington, D.C.”—*CNN Money*

The biggest, most successful people always have the largest targets on their backs and Rick Warren has been no exception. There are even some conservative Mennonites that have engaged in vague bashing of him. Most relatively honest people do not go beyond the vague bashing because there’s not much specific to bash (beyond standard evangelical positions like nonresistance). One of the more specific criticisms is the idea that Rick Warren advocates Chrislam, syncretism between the two

religions. One of the reasons Rick Warren is such an attractive target is that he practices nonresistance when people attack him and does not defend himself. The *Christian Post* writes about two Christian pastors who've worked with Rick Warren extensively who have come to his defense and comprehensively debunked the idea that Warren advocates Chrislam. *-Christian Post*

The prestigious European Organization for Nuclear Research or EONR (which has built the Large Hadron Collider, the largest particle accelerator in the world) has released a study which analyzes the effect that the sun's radiation has on cloud formation, which is the primary driver of weather patterns. Their finding shows that the sun is the biggest contributor to climate change, not human activity. However, the hundred billion dollar climate change industry has done its best to squelch the report. *-The UK Daily Telegraph*

A 16-year-old San Diego boy who was throwing rocks at passing cars was shot with a crossbow by the passenger of a car that he threw rocks at. *-AP*

The GOP-led House introduced legislation to link U.S. funding of the U.N. to certain austerity and policy steps to be taken by the U.N. including not allowing countries that perform human rights abuses to sit on the Human Rights Commission. (Libya was a member until the recent civil war removed its government and its U.N. seat was totally suspended pending the war's outcome.) *-Politico*

The recent earthquake in the Northern VA/DC area caused many witticisms, including the following Tweets: "@comradescott: Evidently the quake occurred on a little known faultline outside of DC called 'Bush's Fault.' #tcot #p2," "@MaizeBlueNation: Fox News claims the Washington Monument is leaning to the right, MSNBC claims it's leaning to the left. More news at 11," "@Ben_Howe: As all of DC leaves work at the same time, the United States experiences a brief economic recovery." *-Washington Examiner*

A man in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, has been charged because he shot a grizzly bear who wandered into his yard with her two cubs while children were playing outside. The grizzly bear is an endangered species and he

faces up to a year in prison and \$50K fine. A state senator and all the Boundary County commissioners showed up to support him at the initial hearing. *-Coeur d'Alene Press*

An experimental military plane that traveled at Mach 20 crashed twenty minutes into the thirty-minute test over the Pacific Ocean. It takes 12 minutes at Mach 20 to travel from New York to Los Angeles. *-LA Times*

The *New York Times* writes of former USSR member Belarus which is still a practical dictatorship: "Iron-fisted authorities in Belarus have responded to a burst of creative modes of protest by young protesters with a rather surreal innovation of their own: a law that prohibits people from standing together and doing nothing." *-NYT*

Islamic Sharia law subscribes to "an eye for an eye" justice. *AP* writes: "An Iranian woman who was blinded by a suitor who threw acid on her face has pardoned her attacker at the last minute, sparing him from being blinded by acid as retribution. Iranian state television broadcast footage Sunday of Ameneh Bahrami in the operating room with her attacker, Majid Mohavedi, who was on his knees waiting for her to drop acid in his eyes as punishment. Bahrami said she has forgiven Mohavedi and pardoned him. State TV showed Mohavedi weeping and saying Bahrami was 'very generous.' Mohavedi poured acid on Bahrami's face and blinded her in 2004 for rejecting his marriage proposal. A 2008 Iranian court order allowed Bahrami to pour the corrosive chemical in Mohavedi's eyes as retribution." *-AP*

"U.S. intelligence agencies concluded in a classified report late last year that Russia's military intelligence was responsible for a bomb blast that occurred at an exterior wall of the U. S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia, in September." Russia invaded U. S. ally Georgia in 2008. *-Washington Times*

Pro-regime thugs attacked U. S. Ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, as he observed an opposition protest. Many nations have condemned Syria's brutal crackdowns on protestors. *-Foreign Policy Magazine*

As always, I welcome your feedback to hansmast@hansmast.com.

Hedonistic Pleasure or Joy?

by Paul L. Miller

*“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy;
at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11).*

Hedonism is “the doctrine that pleasure is the sole or chief good in life.” We rightly ask: *Is it hedonistic pleasure that makes life good?* I think this says it better: ***Real pleasure is a gift of God.***

In Ecclesiastes 2, Solomon lists some things he did in his youth in pursuit of meaning and found them dead-end streets. He tried mirth (laughter); great works (architectural feats); wine and great vineyards; gardens and orchards, trees and pools; servants; cattle, silver, and gold; men and women singers and various musical instruments—just about anything he thought might bring him enjoyment. After trying them all, he decided they were but “vanity and vexation of spirit.”

Notice Paul’s comments in 1 Timothy 6 where he discusses the perils of pursuing another snare for Solomon—riches. Paul explains that having as one’s chief goal that of getting rich is a slippery slope to spiritual disaster (verses 3-6). His summary statement in verse 17 stands out: *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”* Notice that last statement. Who is it that gives us all things to enjoy? *God does.* We wrongly assume that if we don’t make up our minds to be sure we get “the good life,” we will miss it.

What then shall we pursue? Nothing brings us joy like when Christ gives us new hearts and He dwells in us by our faith in Him (Ephesians 3:17). Jesus invites us to pursue His Kingdom and His righteousness. In Matthew 6:19-34, Jesus explains

in some detail about how we are to live life with confidence in God’s goodness and provision. It is only as we pursue God and His will for us that we experience true pleasure—without a bitter aftertaste.

The Epicureans, in Acts 17:16-34, pursued carnal pleasure like the hedonists they were. The Stoics, their opponents in debate, disagreed with them. They maintained that all emotion must be suppressed and denied. Both parties apparently hoped that Paul, the famed ex-Pharisee from Tarsus, would take their side in debate, but Paul declined. He didn’t tell them point blank how wrong both philosophies were, however, but made it clear that the first step in finding enjoyment is not in trying to make oneself happy. The first step is repentance. If we would be happy, we must first repent of our *sin* (inherited) and our *sins* (committed). Life has meaning only if we live it in a “God-first, God-centered” way. If we live it in a “me-first, me-centered” mode, regardless of how hard we may try to put a good face on it, we will be disappointed.

Paul indicated that enjoyment comes to us and our pursuit reaches its goal if we first repent, then trust and obey Jesus. This is how he explained it to the philosophers on Mars’ Hill: “For in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

It is not surprising that Christians are typically the most fulfilled—most jubilant—people on earth. Nor is it surprising that whether or not we are “abased” or “abound” (Philippians 4:12), we find reason to live joyfully. Even in persecution, true Christians are “more than conquerors

through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37).

We’ve heard it put this way: *We either choose the destiny and accept the path, or choose the path and accept the destiny.* Let us arm ourselves with the mind of Christ (1 Peter 4:1), who for the joy that awaited Him, bravely faced death on the cross, and experienced *joy*. Yes, He wept and acknowledged sorrow, but He was always confident of God’s goodness and we can live in that confidence too.

When we realize we can’t make ourselves happy, we can come penitently to the foot of the cross of Calvary. As we lay our sins at Jesus’ feet, He sets us on our feet with assurance of forgiveness (John 8:11).

Here’s an example of Christian joy: Both Christians and non-Christians get married. Their experiences have similarities, but the true child of God experiences deeper joy in marriage than does the unbeliever. Without repentance, it is unnatural to forgive and to love unselfishly. If one has not faced his own sins, others’ flaws and sins look huge. The unregenerate tend to see life as an opportunity to make their

mark in life and to *get* from others. The regenerate see life as an opportunity to walk with God and to *give* to others.

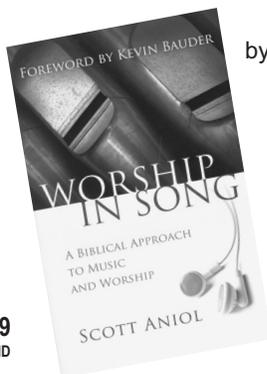
After we have thus placed ourselves on the receiving end with God and received from Him a fatherly blessing as He claims us a beloved son or daughter, we are to come regularly “to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). God answers prayers of faith offered in Jesus’ name (John 14:13, 14). When we cultivate a humble, teachable attitude, we are eligible for “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

That’s how it is that joy is available every day. We don’t get joy by pursuing pleasure directly. We don’t find joy by denying all emotion. It is when we give our sins and burdens contritely to God, that He gives us a joy so pervasive it outshines self-pursued pleasure by a country mile. Then, whatever comes, like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:39), we are set to go on our way rejoicing! *Praise the Lord!* ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Calvary Messenger*, June 2011.

Worship in Song

*A Biblical Approach to Music
and Worship*



by Scott
Aniol

281
pages

\$17.99
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While not from an Anabaptist perspective, this book is an excellent doctrinal and practical exposition of the Biblical principles of both personal and corporate worship, together with an in-depth examination of present-day music issues. Michael Harding gives the following review:

Worship in Song is one of the most insightful explanations of Biblical worship that I have ever read. Pastor Scott Aniol harmonizes the concepts of God’s beauty, aesthetics, affection for God, accurate theology, and musical expertise unlike any other book on this subject. I enthusiastically recommend *Worship in Song* as a must read for pastors, church music directors, and all Christian musicians who sincerely desire to lead their congregations to worship God in spirit and in truth.

Available from: **Sword & Trumpet** • P.O. Box 575 • Harrisonburg, VA 22801 • 540-867-9419



Sermon of the Month



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

The World in Revolt

by Mike Matthews

Nations that once feared God now ignore Him and despise His Word. Children from godly homes are rebelling against the faith of their parents. Not much has changed in the last four thousand years, since Babel.

God recorded key moments in history to warn and comfort His people (1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4). We may get discouraged by the sins of our nation and our children, but God wants to encourage us. A quick walk through the Bible's account of Babel reveals some important lessons for us today. God is still patiently working out His plans, even though we can't always see how.

**"AND THE WHOLE EARTH WAS OF ONE LANGUAGE, AND OF ONE SPEECH"
(Genesis 11:1).**

To properly understand the account of Babel, we must remember the circumstances in which Moses presented it to the Hebrew people. They had just been freed from slavery in Egypt around 1491 B.C. They were about to enter the promised land and annihilate the wicked nations of Canaan. They needed to understand where nations came from and why God had the authority to judge them for their sin.

Moses knew about the history, geography, languages, and cultures of his world. He had been trained in the court of Pharaoh. Yet he did not rely on his education because God spoke to Him directly. God's words—whether spoken to Moses or recorded in the Bible for us today—are the highest author-

ity we could or should ever want.

God's claims do not have to be "proven," yet the evidence lines up with God's statements about the past. Genesis 11:1-9 describes a unique revolution in human history. At first, all people on earth were literally of "one lip" and "one words." They had the same grammar and vocabulary. But as a result of God's judgment, their language was divided into several languages, according to "families." This is what we find today.

"THEY FOUND A PLAIN IN THE LAND OF SHINAR; AND THEY DWELT THERE" (v. 2).

After the Flood (about 2348 B.C., according to chronologer James Ussher) God commanded Noah's descendants to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 9:1), but instead they took up permanent residence, with no apparent intention to spread out.

This rebellion, which took place a century or two after Noah's Flood, was no surprise to God. While promising not to send another Flood, God told Noah that human sinfulness was still a problem. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21). Rebellion has been a pattern ever since Adam disobeyed God.

"GO TO, LET US MAKE BRICK, AND BURN THEM THOROUGHLY" (v. 3).

Where did these early humans learn to build a city and tower? Long before Noah's Flood, Cain was a city-builder, and his descendant Tubal-cain was gifted in brass

and iron (Genesis 4:17-22). It is clear from the genealogies in Genesis that Noah lived among these people for six hundred years before the Flood came, acquiring their technology and possibly their books. His sons had plenty of time to develop their construction skills, too, while building the Ark.

***“GO TO, LET US BUILD US A CITY
AND A TOWER, . . . LEST WE BE
SCATTERED ABROAD” (v. 4).***

The settlers at Babel went out of their way to ensure that they would *not* be scattered, contrary to what God had commanded. They put down roots in one place, including a tower that they could rally around.

Notice the words *us*, *ourselves*, and *we*. Moses makes it clear that pride was the real problem at Babel. Building cities and towers is not evil, but proud motives can turn even the most worthwhile activities into sin. Any human activity, done for the wrong reason, is wicked, as Proverbs 21:4 warns that “the plowing of the wicked, is sin.”

The rebels wanted to build their tower “whose top may reach unto heaven.” This figure of speech, a hyperbole, is similar to the description of the cities in Canaan as “walled up to heaven” (Deuteronomy 1:28).

There is some question about the purpose of the tower. Some have suggested they wanted to build a structure large enough and strong enough to survive another Flood, but why would they build the tower in the plains rather than on a mountain? Other commentators, such as Luther, suggest that the builders wanted to construct a symbol of their self-reliance. The rebels were shaking their fists at Heaven, as it were, by building such a great structure in their own power.

Early Jewish writers and Christian commentators suggested that the tower was the first center of false religion in the post-Flood world. (Revelation 17:5 also indicates that Babel was the mother of world religions.) One recent suggestion is that, like ziggurats built in later cities of the region, the tower was a symbolic bridge between Heaven and earth, a place where the gods could come down to earth or rest.

While God does interact with humans in unusual ways (see Jacob’s ladder in Genesis 28:12), it is the height of folly for humans to think they can bridge the gap between the physical world and the spiritual world by their own efforts.

“LET US MAKE US A NAME” (v. 4).

This sentence reveals the arrogance of the people at Babel. They sought a name for themselves rather than to honor the name of their Creator, who is above all and whose name is worthy of all praise.

Throughout history, humans have longed to share God’s glory. The serpent tempted Eve with the promise that she and Adam could “be as gods.” All man-made religions try to “honor” God by the works of their own hands. God, in contrast, is not impressed by our works. He desires obedience and humility (1 Samuel 15:22, 23). Moses’ account reminds us how we are all naturally stubborn and rebellious.

Ironically, if we are humble and obedient, God will honor our name. Moses shows this by contrasting the events at Babel with the later faithfulness of Abraham. God promised to make Abraham’s name great, and all he needed was humble faith (Genesis 12:2).

***“AND THE LORD CAME DOWN TO SEE
THE CITY AND THE TOWER” (v. 5).***

This verse marks the dramatic turning point in Moses’ account of the events at Babel. God takes note of man’s plans. Then He steps in to reverse them.

Repeatedly, we learn that God observes our actions (Adam, the wicked generation of Noah’s day, Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.), and He judges us accordingly. Nothing escapes God’s attention. No individual sin, no sin of a nation. That is the lesson of Babel.

***“NOW NOTHING WILL BE RESTRAINED
FROM THEM, WHICH THEY HAVE
IMAGINED TO DO” (v. 6).***

This is one of the most amazing claims in the Bible. God has truly given mankind incredible gifts. We can fly to the moon, land probes on comets, and peer into the

deepest recesses of the universe.

God gave us these talents for the purpose of glorifying His name, but our incredible gifts, if used for the wrong purpose, can destroy us. So God “restrains” humans. Unlike the judgment during Noah’s day, when God wiped out the entire world, here He intervened before the rebellion had gone too far.

**“GO TO, LET US GO DOWN, AND THERE
CONFOUND THEIR LANGUAGE” (v. 7).**

God’s gentleness in judging the rebels at Babel is a lesson for us today. God did not let human rebellion run its full course, as He had before Noah’s Flood. He nipped the rebellion in its early stages so that people would not hurt themselves too much.

By changing one language into many, He separated nations more effectively than any Wall of China. God stepped in to prevent the human race from falling under the sway of a single, absolute tyrant over all the earth. Only in *His* time would Christ gather together God’s family from every nation and tongue (Revelation 7:9).

Note God’s ironic words. Just as the rebels said, “Let us build a tower,” God said, “Let us confound their language.” Human counsels can’t stand in the face of God’s counsel. As the original creator of human speech, God could easily rewire speech so that the evil speakers could no longer speak to one another.

**“SO THE LORD SCATTERED THEM
ABROAD” (v. 8).**

Moses closes this account with a reminder that God will always accomplish His will. We may think we have found a way to circumvent His will, but that is just an appearance. As King Solomon later wrote, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Proverbs 21:1).

By this simple act, God forced humanity to proceed down His chosen path—to resettle the earth by families.

God’s first judgment after the Flood proved that He would continue to superintend the events of human history. God wants us to turn to Him, rather than relying on

ourselves. One day, whether they like it or not, all people will bow their knee before the name of Jesus Christ, the true bridge between Heaven and earth (Phil. 2:9-11).

**“THEREFORE IS THE NAME OF IT
CALLED BABEL” (v. 9).**

Mankind’s rebellion came full circle. The people earned a name for their city, but not a name of their own choosing. Their city’s name became Babel, from a related word meaning “confusion.”

But the story does not end there. The next verse opens a new chapter in history: “These are the generations of Shem” (Genesis 11:10). The history of this family becomes the focus of the rest of the Old Testament.

Through Abraham, a descendant of Shem, all the nations on earth would be blessed. God had promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and make his name great (Genesis 12:2). God planned that the nations would one day learn about a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who would descend from Abraham. All along, God had planned eventually to build a city, united under the rule of Christ. Unlike impatient man, however, God would patiently build this city on His own timetable.

With the eyes of faith, Abraham looked for this city, “whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). In contrast to the tiny cities built by human hands, God’s city will be everlasting, built on a grand scale, approximately 1,500 miles (2225 km) square and 1,500 miles high, with streets of gold and walls of precious jewels (Revelation 21:16).

God’s plans included an incredible way for repentant sinners to join Him in this city—by faith in Jesus Christ. With His dramatic miracle at Pentecost when people from nations all over the earth first heard the Gospel in their own tongue, God let the world know that He had begun overcoming the effects of Babel. Since then, He has been patiently fulfilling His plan to call people to His eternal city “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev. 5:9).■

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How Sufficient Is God's Grace?

by Ray Crooks

Through acts and exhibitions such as those manifesting His favor, kindness, mercy, leniency, and charity, God displays and shares His marvelous grace. We cannot fully understand, explain, or fathom it, nor do we merit this grace lavished upon us. It is immensely beneficial to frail and sometimes failing human beings as we experience the complexities of life.

Not always does this grace shield us from experiencing challenging situations, such as illness, distressing relationships, financial woes, or other great disappointments, but during those times God's grace lifts and sustains. Paul found it to be so amid the shipwrecks, beatings, stoning, stripes, and many other dangers (2 Corinthians 11:22-33).

On top of everything else, Paul had a troublesome thorn in the flesh. Repeated prayer brought no evident deliverance, but only the word from the Lord, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (12:9). Could he victoriously stand on that promise while being prodded by all these "thorns"? They could have sounded like empty words and wishful thinking, but not so to Paul. He took them for real and firmly stood on them. He held to them while they held him.

These were God's words, not the apostle's. They still apply to us, here and now. Listen to the Lord speaking, and let one or more of His provisions stand out to you:

My grace is sufficient for thee.
My grace is sufficient for thee.
My grace is sufficient for thee.
My grace is sufficient for thee.
My grace is sufficient for thee.

Is His grace sufficient for you? for me? These are not idle words of a kind elderly grandfather who merely wishes us well. This was the great "I AM THAT I AM"

speaking profound truth to finite human beings. He urges that we trust and not be afraid, for He knows that our going through fiery tests will make us stronger and that His grace is sufficient.

What insures great machinery such as fine automobiles or farming equipment? Severe testing, strengthening, rebuilding, then retesting.

What makes great fiction such as was written by Charles Dickens? Nearly impossible difficulties the characters faced but overcame.

What developed strong character among farmers in the early 1930s? Valiantly struggling through the Great Depression when it appeared all hope was gone.

What makes great Christians? Overcoming the fierce tests and trials common to believers through intense, persistent faith in Christ.

If the machinery broke, it was improved. If the lead character in the fiction was almost defeated, he tried again. If the crop failed, the farmer worked all the harder. If the Christian faced Satan almost face-to-face, he would not give up.

Are my problems—or yours—greater than those faced by our spiritual predecessors? Does God know about our situations, yours and mine? Does He care what happens to us? Yes, of course He knows and cares. And, more than that, His abundant grace is sufficient.

It is sufficient for the youth facing fierce peer pressures, fiery relational temptations, and other difficult challenges.

It is sufficient for the widow, widower, or other single experiencing loneliness and desiring and needing companionship.

It is sufficient for the couple rearing their children in humanistic, God-rejecting surroundings. *(continued on page 19)*



Counseling From the Word

Wisdom Will Save Your Counselee (and You) From Sexual Immorality

by Jay Younts

Dealing with sexual immorality is a challenge for any counselor. Deeply entrenched patterns of lust have become a part of the counselee's lifestyle. Sinful relationships have replaced godly ones. Selfishness has won out over selflessness. Yet in spite of these ugly realities, the Holy Spirit makes some bold challenges in verses 12 and 16 of Proverbs 2. The Spirit claims that through the pursuit of wisdom, a follower of God can be saved from the power of bad, corrupting company and from sexual sin.

Really? How?

The first five verses of Proverbs 2 provide the answer. For wisdom to save you, you must pursue it with passionate, consuming intensity. Wisdom driven by passion is the most valuable skill that a human being can learn. Being wise is not just knowing a lot of information; it is applying truth to life—24/7.

And what do these fine-sounding words look like in action, in everyday life? Well, here is one Biblical example that shows wisdom in action. It is the example of Joseph when he was sexually confronted by Potiphar's wife. From previous encounters with this woman, Joseph knew of her desires; he knew the intensity of this confrontation. This time she would not take *no* for an answer. We pick up the story in Genesis 39:10–12:10. She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he

refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, "Come on, sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house (NLT).

Wisdom meant running? In this case, yes! For Joseph, the honor of God drove him. Earlier in the narrative we are told how Joseph answered the would-be adulteress' first overtures:

"Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God" (Genesis 39:8, 9 NLT).

In a foreign culture, where gods other than the Lord were worshiped, Joseph lays it on the line. What he was being asked to do was a great sin against God. So, when she "traps" Joseph when all of the other servants are out of the house, he knows the honor of his God is at stake. He is aware of how dangerous the temptation is. He knows the time for reasonable protest is over. He does what some might think is rash and foolish: he tears himself from her grip and flees. Joseph demonstrated that he knew how to manage people. He was

not naive. He knew that he would be subject to the lies of this dishonorable woman. But he runs anyway, because he will not sin against his God. He is vulnerable to her whims, but by running from the temptation he entrusts himself to the care of the God who had rescued him from the pit. Honoring God was more important to Joseph than his reputation before men.

Yes, wisdom meant running. For Joseph, at that time, running was wisdom in action.

Someone might say, "Well, how was Joseph saved?" All his integrity got him was to be thrown into jail for something he didn't do!

Joseph was saved because he lived for God. Even in prison Joseph honored his Lord. And then, in God's own time, He elevated Joseph to the second most powerful position in Egypt. I wonder how comfortable Potiphar and his wife were feeling the moment they learned that Joseph would be in charge.

Joseph's story is an example of wisdom—wisdom that is being pursued as if nothing else really matters. This second chapter of Proverbs says exactly that: acquiring God's wisdom must drive his people more than anything else. *The protection is in the pursuit.*

This is the message that you want your counselee to grasp. If she will not pursue wisdom with all of her heart, she will remain easy prey for her sexual desires. If he will not pursue wisdom as if his life depended on it, he will remain glued to whatever screen he can find: locked into the miserable lust for pornography. The first five verses of Proverbs 2 are so clear that their meaning is easily missed. If your counselee or your teenager wants to find the knowledge of God that will free him from his lust, he must engage in an all-out pursuit of wisdom, a wisdom that dominates his life. Or, as Ephesians 5:18 says, he must be completely filled or dominated by the Spirit of God. Attempting to turn away from lust-driven sins, simply by assenting to a Biblical truth, will in no way

bring victory over those sins. The knowledge is essential, but this knowledge must lead to passionate action.

Joseph pursued sexual purity as if it were buried treasure. Nothing could deter him. He was not so much running from sin as he was fleeing to God. This is how wisdom will save one from sexual sin.

If your counselee is not engaged in this passionate pursuit of wisdom, his emotions will work against him. He already knows that the sexual sin is wrong. He must want the wisdom of God more than he wants to satisfy the cravings of his flesh. The only way to live out the wisdom of God is to be consumed by it. Don't give your counselee less than he needs. Help him to see that there is nothing that he can desire that compares with the wisdom of loving Jesus Christ. Running headlong after wisdom can be a humbling experience, but that is how one finds life that is truly life. This is how wisdom will save your counselee from sexual immorality. ■

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HOW SUFFICIENT IS GOD'S GRACE? . . .

cont'd. from p. 17

It is sufficient for the distressed and physically-weakened older saint not sure of their earthly future.

It is sufficient for the challenged Christian worker or minister.

Whoever you and I are and whatever we face we may recall the Lord's powerful words, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Then we can try one more time. Then we can hope and pray once again. Keep the faith. Gladly rejoice in His great grace—His exceedingly great grace—even before we actually experience the outcome. With Martin Luther before the Diet of Worms we can firmly declare, "Here I stand, so help me, God!" ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Church Herald and Holiness Banner*, May 2011.

How to Wisely Manage Money

by Harold S. Martin

As Christians, we have been taught fairly often about giving generously to worthy causes, but sometimes not much is said about how to faithfully handle the money we spend for our own needs—and the needs of our families.

God is not only concerned with the amount we give to support various ministries. He is also concerned with what we do with our *entire* income.

I was born in 1930. The Great Depression in the United States came in October 1929. Money was very scarce in those days. My mother washed clothes on a scrub-board. We had no indoor plumbing, no bathroom, not even a drain in our kitchen sink.

During my youth, I never rode a school bus; we walked or rode a bicycle to school. Every Wednesday my sisters and I were each given one penny to buy candy on our way home from school. Our food was mashed potatoes, baked beans, peanut butter crackers, mush and milk, and fried mush the next morning. We had vegetables and fruits during the summer growing season, and that was largely our diet. We generally had meat at mealtimes only on those Sundays when we had company for the noon meal. I worked during the summer (in early teen years) picking up potatoes for 50 cents a day—and in a hardware store (in mid-teen years) for 16 cents an hour—and while in college, I worked for a plumber (in the office) for 40 cents an hour.

But actually, I had it pretty good compared to the masses of people who inhabit the earth.

- We think it is a sacrifice to live in a trailer rather than a more substantial

house—but more than half of the people live in huts of mud and straw, or in shacks made of cardboard, plastic, or tin.

- 90% of the people on earth do not have an automobile.
- We learn to read, and go to doctors, and eat nutritious foods—but millions of refugees in Pakistan, Mozambique, and Sudan live day after day on fruits and nuts, and on broth made by boiling tree roots.
- More people *go to bed hungry each night*, than there are people who have sufficient food.
- More people have a lifespan of *less than 45 years*, than there are people who have a lifespan of at least threescore and ten.
- More mothers of the world see *half of their offspring die in childhood*, than there are mothers who see their children reach maturity.
- More people live and die *without the help of a single doctor*, than there are people who have plenty of medical care.
- While we search the refrigerator for an extra serving of dessert, many search daily to find just a bit of food to survive. While we search for an unneeded Christmas gift for a friend, many search for the bare necessities for their families. We feel handicapped without electricity for two hours, but many people in the world will never have access to electricity—for even five minutes!

Some of what we say about money management is based on Bible truths—some is based on common sense, and some on practical experience. I don't insist that every statement made in this lesson is like the laws of the Medes and Persians (which

could not be changed). Some of the thoughts expressed on the subject of money are open to a variety of opinions. Some of the ideas are debatable.

The major point of the lesson is that, as Christians, we are to be *thrifty* without being *stingy*.

1. PRINCIPLES OF GOOD MONEY MANAGEMENT

There are some basic principles that should govern our use of money.

a. Acknowledge God's Ownership

"The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1).

All that we are and all that we have belongs to God. God owns everything; we are stewards of that which belongs to God—and a steward is to be a faithful caretaker of that which belongs to another. We don't own anything. All that we have is on loan, and God holds the note. When we check out of this life and go into the next—there's going to be a final accounting.

b. Avoid Careless Indulgence

"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:8).

Lots of families spend money to coordinate the furnishings—to match the colors of carpets and furniture and curtains—all of which seems unnecessary.

It seems obvious that the advent of the supermarket and the common use of the credit card have had a tremendous impact on the buying habits of multitudes of people. The endless shopping sprees often lead to careless indulgence. Some American families are spending *more* each year than they earn—and that, down the road, will lead to disaster.

c. Prepare for Unexpected Decreases

"I know both how to be abased, and . . . how to abound" [speaking of money, good times, and bad times] (Philippians 4:12).

We must be alert to the fact that our income could be reduced because of an eco-

nomie slowdown, a physical injury, a company's change of hands, a fire that burns a property, or a death in the family.

The best preparation for any possible future financial stress is to try to stay out of debt, share generously with others, and trust God for His provision even in hard times.

d. Have Peace About Your Purchases

"Let the peace of God rule [be an umpire] in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15).

This means that most spur-of-the-moment decisions to buy should be avoided. Jesus says that when we contemplate buying (or building), we should sit down first and count the cost (Luke 14:28).

Each time we have an urge to spend for another item, it is a good idea to put it on an "impulse list"—date it, wait 30 days, pray about it, and then see if you still want to buy it. Most people who do that generally buy only about half of what they earlier wanted. (If you are considering buying a lemon at the grocery store, I doubt that you should struggle over that decision.)

e. Consider Your Witness to Others

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

We should avoid extravagance in our daily living, for if we live in luxury and dress in the very best garments—where is the self-denial? Where is overcoming the flesh? Where is nonconformity to the world? Where is setting our affections on things above?

Certainly, having closets full of clothes *that are seldom used*, and living a lifestyle *characterized by luxury*—is a tragic mistake for God's people. Most people would likely do well to take steps toward simplifying their living standards.

2. MORE BIBLE TEACHINGS RELATED TO MONEY

Over 450 Bible passages deal with the subject of *money*. It is the second most dominant theme in the entire Bible—

second only to the subject of *idolatry*. Jesus spoke more about money than He did about Heaven or Hell or sexual immorality. His parables present wealth as a great temptation, and danger, and even a hindrance to a proper relationship with God.

Every Christian has probably read that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God (Luke 18:25). Yet many of us find it easy to pursue more and more wealth, instead of striving to live on less.

Money is one of the most unsatisfying of possessions. It *does* take away some cares, but it brings with it many additional concerns. One writer says of money: “*There is trouble getting it, anxiety in keeping it, temptations in the use of it, guilt in the abuse of it, sorrow in losing it, and perplexity in disposing of it*” (J. C. Ryle in *Practical Religion*, “Riches and Poverty,” page 327). One can be surrounded by all kinds of material things, and still sense that something is gnawing a hole in the heart.

Many Bible passages deal with the use of money and our attitudes toward money. We look at a portion of 1 Timothy 6:

“*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content*” (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

In verses 6-8, Paul lists four results of desiring to be rich:

a. A lack of simple contentment (v. 6)

We are told that “*godliness with contentment is great gain.*” There is a *satisfaction* which ought to characterize the child of God. We must not be satisfied with what *we are* (for there is always room to improve our character), but we should constantly work at being satisfied with what *we have*. Contentment does not come from having all our wants supplied; it comes instead from *reducing our desires* to include only the essentials of life. We are not to covet (Tenth Commandment). We

are not to be caught up with the craving for more and more.

b. The notion that we can take it with us (v. 7)

We “*brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*”

Every person comes into the world without a penny in his pocket; in fact, we come without a pocket in which to put a penny. And all of us will leave the world without taking any material goods with us. Before Alexander the Great died, he said, “When I am dead, see that my hands are *not* wrapped in cloth, but are placed with the palms up, so that all who pass by can see that they are empty.” We can gather little or much between birth and death, but in the final hour, we will leave it all behind.

c. An excessive desire for unnecessary things (v. 8)

If we have “food and clothing,” we are to be content. The word *clothing* is plural and means “coverings.” It refers to both clothing and shelter. If we have food, clothing, and shelter, we should be satisfied. Contentment consists of *being satisfied with the basic necessities of life*.

The self-centered Adamic nature seems to want more. From the time we could crawl on our knees, we wanted a little red wagon, and then a tricycle with a bell—and then a bicycle, a car, and a house—and dozens of other things. Today it’s **cell phones** and **elaborate computers** and **snowmobiles** and **minibikes** and **digital cameras** and **video games** and **lots of snacks**, including a lot of **rich desserts**. Jesus says we should not “lay up for ourselves treasures upon earth”—and yet for many, those words might just as well *not be* in the Bible!

It is easy in this age of plenty to become obsessed with the desire to gorge ourselves with unnecessary things—many of which soon become more stuff to sell at the next garage sale. Material things can really get a tight grip on us. It is easy to think that we must have expensive furniture, sleek

automobiles, restored antiques, extravagant holidays, up-to-date hunting equipment, etc. One of the best-selling board games today is called “Mall Madness” (a Milton Bradley toy), which demonstrates how much materialism has gripped American Society.

The two factors that have a tremendous impact on the buying habits of multitudes of people in the western world are the *supermarket* and the *credit card*. Two cautions will help us to be wise in responding to these blessings.

(1) *Don't shop in the supermarket when you are hungry.*

(2) *Don't use a credit card unless for convenience and then pay the balance in full each month.*

There is the story of the frugal Amish couple who were working outside when they saw a moving van pull up next door, hauling the earthly goods of their new neighbor. Among the many items unloaded from the truck were a deluxe refrigerator with a built-in ice maker, a state-of-the-art stereo system with a compact disc player, a remote-controlled television with a DVD player, and a whirlpool hot tub. The following day the Amish couple welcomed their new neighbors, and stopped by with a welcoming gift.

After the usual greetings and a cordial conversation, the Amish man concluded their visit by saying, “If anything should go wrong with your appliances or equipment, don't hesitate to call me.”

The neighbor said, “That's very generous of you. Thank you.”

“No problem,” the Amishman said, “I'll just tell you how to live without them.”

d. A path toward spiritual destruction (vv. 9, 10)

Those who have a craving to be rich fall into many harmful desires (1 Timothy 6:9). What are some of the evils of which the love of money becomes a major cause?

A long list could be given. *Greed* for money leads to selfishness, cheating, fraud, perjury, robbery, envy, quarreling, hatred,

violence, and even murder. **Greed** lies behind *pushing drugs, pornography, the exploitation of the weak, the neglect of good causes, and the betrayal of friends.*

The desire for riches is one of Satan's snares. Following after riches has brought many to spiritual destruction. People sometimes *deceive*, and *defraud*, and *cheat*—all to get more money. Verse 10 clearly states that it is not necessarily **an abundance** of money, but **the love of money**, which often leads to *lying, stealing, and prostitution*. And so indeed, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Greed for money has lured people into *gambling, fraud, arson, perjury, theft, and even murder.*

Multitudes who violate God's laws to get money and material things, have “*pierced themselves through with many sorrows*” (v. 10b). Those sorrows include the **tragedy** of a wasted life, the **sorrow** of losing children to the world, and the **grief** of seeing wealth vanish overnight. All of us must guard against becoming obsessed with material comforts, and with a desire to gorge ourselves with trivial things. A good philosophy is this: “Use it up; wear it out; make it do; do without.”

In 1 Timothy 6:17-21, Paul gives some admonitions to those who are wealthy.

The dedicated Christian must come to recognize that his wealth is for *sharing*, and not primarily for *hoarding*. Jesus said, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35). In the earlier verses of 1 Timothy 6, Paul addressed those *who were seeking wealth*; now he speaks to those *who are already rich*.

Those who are rich in this world are *not to be “high-minded [haughty], nor trust in uncertain riches”* (verse 17a). Not all of the early Christians were peasants and slaves; some were people of great wealth. **They were not rebuked for being wealthy, nor** is it suggested **that they should give away all their possessions**. They are simply instructed *not to trust in them*. One of the great snares of riches is that it's difficult to have them

without trusting in them.

The term “uncertain riches” means that they are here today and gone tomorrow. The word *haughty* means “to be proud of themselves”—as if they deserved the riches. God often gives riches as a reward for thriftiness and hard work. The person who increased his five talents so that they became ten talents (Matthew 25:14-30), was rewarded for his diligence—and just so, the Lord often blesses those who are diligent and frugal. But the people who *love* money, even if they earn it honestly, can easily become a slave to it. It’s easy to stray from the faith and backslide from God.

The clause, “*who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*” (verse 17b), means that “good and proper things in life are to be used and appreciated without feelings of guilt.” This includes food and exercise and nature and vacations and rest and family life, etc. This statement is not intended to condone luxurious living, but it does provide **balance** to those who might want to use verse 8 to insist that we must live in mud houses and walk barefooted in summertime so that we don’t have to buy as many shoes.

The wealthy are exhorted to “do good” and to be “rich in good works.” They are to be generous with their giving, using money *to do good works*—supporting missionaries, spreading the Gospel, and helping the needy. Those who give generously to support the cause of Christ will lay a foundation for the world to come. It will bring blessings in both worlds. “Eternal life” (verse 19b) is life everlasting—life that is *really* life—life that goes on forever!

Each of us needs to strive for a happy median regarding material things, seeking to be thrifty without being miserly. Proverbs 30:8, 9 provides a good balance. If one is poor, there may be a temptation to steal; if one is rich, there may be a tendency to think he can get along without God, and perhaps deny any need for God. It is best for most of us just to have the simple necessities of life—no more and no

less. So it is well to pray, “Lord, help us to escape the *dangers* of prosperity, and save us from the *desperations* of poverty.”

Nothing impresses an individual with the emptiness of materialism like a trip to a junkyard or a dump. Take a look at everything in these places—all of it was once someone’s treasure. ■

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“AND THE EVENING AND THE MORNING . . .”

cont’d.

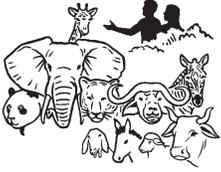
the fact that *yom* can mean an indefinite period of time? The word *yom* is used with a number 359 times outside of Genesis 1 and always means an ordinary day.² Why would the exception be in its first use? Nineteen times each the word *morning* or *evening* is used with *yom* outside Genesis 1 and 38 times the words *morning* and *evening* are used together without “*yom*” and always without exception it references a normal day.³ In Genesis 1 the writer(s) didn’t use just one of these, but used them in combination (number, morning and evening) as if to say it’s a normal day, it’s a normal day, and oh, by the way, it’s a normal day.

Whether one believes in a “young” universe or one that has evolved over billions of years, one thing that should be readily obvious: the writer(s) of Genesis clearly intended to convey to his readers that creation week according to Genesis 1 occurred over six normal (approximately twenty-four-hour) days. ■

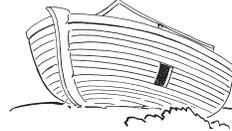
1. As quoted in *Could God Really Have Created Everything in Six Days*, Ham, Ken. http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/nab/could-god-have-created-in-six-days#fnList_1_16.

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3. *Ibid.*



Beginning Issues



“And the Evening and the Morning . . .”

Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31

by John Mullett

In the debate over the age of the earth some views such as Theistic Evolution and Progressive Creationism have tried to harmonize the “findings” of modern science and accommodate long ages by defining the days described in Genesis 1 as long or indefinite periods of time. Is this explanation a plausible one? Did the writer have options in wording to clearly express his intentions? What does the Bible say; is it clear what the writer(s) intended? In this article I want to look at the verses (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31) that perhaps most clearly address these questions.

Each of these verses contains the phrase “And the evening and the morning was the [number] day.” Context is always a key in interpreting a passage and this is no exception. In this case I believe the context is very clear on the writer(s)’ intentions and any honest evaluation of a straightforward reading of Genesis never gives any indication of long ages as defined by typical Old-Earth positions.

“Dr. James Barr (*Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford University*), who himself does not believe Genesis is true his-

tory, nonetheless admitted as far as the language of Genesis 1 is concerned that, ‘So far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer(s) of Genesis 1–11 intended to convey to their readers the ideas that (a) creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience; (b) the figures contained in the Genesis genealogies provided by simple addition a chronology from the beginning of the world up to later stages in the Biblical story; (c) Noah’s Flood was understood to be worldwide and extinguish all human and animal life except for those in the ark.’”¹ The idea of millions or billions of years is foreign to the Bible and always comes from outside Scripture.

Often the argument centers around the meaning of the Hebrew word for *day* (*yom*) and whether it means 24 hours or an indefinite period of time. It can mean either of these—it has five meanings—and the intended meaning (as I’ve already mentioned) is usually largely determined by context, but what about
(continued on page 24)

Halfway Anabaptists

by David Steinhauer

They were called the *Halbtaeuffer* or Halfway Anabaptists. These people sympathized with the Swiss Anabaptists but never left the state churches to join Anabaptist brotherhoods. Some sympathized because they recoiled at the horrific treatment these defenseless brethren endured as they were chased, tortured, and slaughtered at the hands of the Swiss authorities. Others were convinced that the Anabaptists practiced a pure Gospel that they themselves did not have the courage to practice openly.

Halfway Anabaptists greatly aided the Anabaptist brethren. They did everything they could to help them escape the fury of persecution. They gave them food and clothing. They allowed them to have meetings on their properties and build shelters in their woodlands. They went out of their way to warn them of approaching danger.

Obviously, the Halfway Anabaptists were a problem for the persecuting authorities. These sympathizers could not be relied upon to help track down and arrest the Anabaptist people. They refused to cooperate in giving information as to where the brethren were hiding. Sometimes when they were commanded by officers of the law to assist in arresting groups of Anabaptists, they would allow the fleeing Anabaptist to run unhindered into the surrounding forests and mountains. While the authorities passed mandates, orders, and prohibitions against aiding the Anabaptists, in some Swiss districts there appeared to be more of the sympathetic Halfway Anabaptists than loyal members of the state church.

It is no wonder that the Anabaptist brethren referred to the Halfway Anabaptists as *die treuherzigem Menschen* or “truehearted people.” The following recorded prayer of Anabaptist origin refers to these “truehearted people”:

“O Holy Father in Heaven, we pray Thee

for all truehearted people who love us and do good unto us, and render us services of mercy by providing us food and nourishment, housing, and shelter. O Lord, do Thou recompense them richly with all that is good. And since they hear Thy Word gladly but have little strength to surrender themselves to obedience, we pray Thee to grant them that they may through Thy Holy Spirit have ingrafted in them Thy Word which is able to save their souls.”

This prayer definitely reflects an appreciation for these Halfway Anabaptists or “truehearted” people,” and what they had done to aid the brethren. It also clearly expresses a concern that the “truehearted people” had not gone far enough in following the Scriptures and that they wished them to be saved.

A number of years later, however, it appears that the Anabaptists’ view of the Halfway Anabaptists had begun to shift; for, eventually a question arose as to whether the Halfway Anabaptists should be considered as saved. This question was one of the points of controversy in the Amish division from the Anabaptists in 1693-1696.

Apparently some of the more tolerant Swiss Anabaptists had not only accepted the Halfway Anabaptists as Christians, but had also intermarried with them and attended the state churches with them on occasion.

Jacob Amman, a leader in the Amish division, believed that to accept the Halfway Anabaptists as Christian was to compromise one of the foundational aspects of Anabaptism. He believed that Anabaptists should cut off all fellowship with the state church and no longer recognize those who continued to be members there as fellow Christians.

From our vantage point today, it is easy to cast judgment on both the Halfway Anabaptists and those who eventually accepted them. God seemed to use the

Halfway Anabaptists to preserve and protect His people when they faced extermination in many Swiss provinces. We are probably better served, however, to evaluate whether we today are Halfway Christians or Halfway Mennonites.

We live in a society that is quite different from that of our Anabaptist forefathers. We no longer face the arresting officers, the dungeon prisons, the torture chambers, and the executioner's sword and fire. However, we still deal with the pressures to believe a partial Gospel and to live as Halfway Christians. Many nominal Christian churches around us do not preach a full Gospel. They do not promote discipleship to Christ in everyday living. They do not practice the "all things" of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount.

But the principles of God's Word are still as effective and as relevant to us today as they were to our Anabaptist forefathers. As conservative Mennonite churches we need to continue to maintain the pure doctrines of the New Testament. We must promote and practice nonresistance as an expression of God's love in our hearts. We must continue to forbid divorce and remarriage as Jesus taught us. We must abstain from the swearing of oaths. We may not love the world and the many things that are highly

esteemed among men but are an abomination to God. We must uphold a high moral standard in both our thoughts and practices. We must keep our churches strong in faith, doctrine, unity, and brotherly love. Much more could be enumerated.

Jesus told the church at Laodicea, "*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth*" (Revelation 3:15, 16). Jesus clearly states that this church was halfway warm and halfway cold. This halfway state was not acceptable to Christ. May our Mennonite churches and their people be fully dedicated to serving the Lord with their whole heart and not halfway. "*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment*" (Mark 12:30). ■

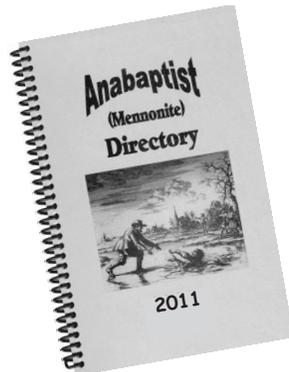
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Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

“... singing with understanding!”

“For the Beauty of the Earth”



by Pierpoint/Kocher, Monk

Lyrics: “Count your many blessings, name them one by one,” the late 19th century gospel song admonishes, and this hymn of thanksgiving and praise seems to do just that. The poet was inspired by a beautiful scene in late spring near his home in Bath, England, so he naturally began “counting his blessings” with the beauty of the earth and sky surrounding him. Once he got started down this train of thought, Folliott Sandford Pierpoint composed a total of eight stanzas thanking God for various aspects of current human existence.

The text was first published with a collection of hymns in 1864, complete with all eight verses and the original refrain “Christ our God, to Thee we raise, this our sacrifice of praise.” When the hymn was printed in the classic English hymnal *Hymns, Ancient and Modern*, the final three verses were dropped, and the refrain edited to “Lord of all, to Thee we raise, this our grateful hymn of praise.” Over time, this was further adapted into the refrain that most hymnals now use, “Lord of all, to Thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.” Only four verses are printed here, but the fifth is often included with this text in other hymnals:

For each perfect gift of Thine
To our race so freely giv’n.

Graces human and divine
Flow’rs of earth and buds of Heav’n.

A lay member of the Anglican Church, Pierpoint spent much of his life as a writer and poet. He published a total of seven volumes of poetry and hymns. He loved nature and the outdoors, and revealed this passion in his writing. Pierpoint is remembered today primarily because of this simple hymn.

Music: Although this text is occasionally associated with other tunes, “Dix,” is by far the most common. It was written by a German composer of the mid-19th century, Conrad Kocher. Interestingly enough, Kocher was very interested in four-part congregational singing, and even founded a “School of Sacred Music” to further the cause of four-part church music in his region. However, he did not originally intend this tune as a four-part hymn; it was part of a larger choral work. William H. Monk edited and condensed the tune for use with William Dix’s carol, “As With Gladness Men of Old,” and published it in the 1861 edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Although Dix somewhat resented the use of this tune with his carol,¹ it has proved to be a solid tune, and works well both as a Christmas carol and Thanksgiving hymn.

1. hymnary.org

For the Beauty of the Earth

DIX 7.7.7.7.7

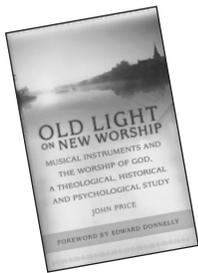
FOLLIOTT SANDFORD PIERPOINT, 1864

ARRANGED FROM CONRAD KOCHER
BY WILLIAM HENRY MONK, 1861

1 For the beau-ty of the earth, For the beau-ty of the skies,
2 For the beau-ty of each hour, Of the day and of the night,
3 For the joy of hu-man love, Broth-er, sis-ter, par-ent, child,
4 For Thy church, that ev-er-more Lift-eth ho-ly hands a-bove,

For the love which from our birth O-ver and a-round us lies:
Hill and vale, and tree and flower, Sun and moon, and stars of light:
Friends on earth, and friends a-bove; For all gen-tle thoughts and mild:
Of-fering up on ev-ery shore Her pure sac-ri-fice of love:

Lord of all, to Thee we raise This our hymn of grate-ful praise. A-men.



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by John
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Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild

Author: *Mary A. Kassian*

Publisher: *Moody Publishers, 2010.*

256 pp.

Available from: *CBD and Barnes & Noble,
and various online sellers*

“Don’t judge a book by its cover” came to mind after I saw and then read *Girls Gone Wise*, by Mary A. Kassian. Three small photographs, set in a makeup kit, show portions of the faces of girls who have obviously cast their lot with the latter half of the title. The introductory chapter, with its description of what Kassian calls “Wild Things,” made me wonder if the book was one I would recommend to my daughters or merely read myself and attempt to summarize its wisdom for them. As I read on, however, I decided that here was a collection of Scriptural teaching that needed to be heard firsthand!

What would we become if exposed to 3,596 hours of mass media yearly, as the U. S. Census Bureau estimates the average woman is? Popular culture has been conditioned by feminism to expect unbiblical characteristics from women. The media reflects this mindset with a counterfeit version of what womanhood is all about, promoting sin and mocking righteousness.

Mary Kassian writes to young women who have known little other than the “normal” portrayed by the media, but she skillfully compares it to a story of human nature that is as old as the time of Solomon. “Update the fashion and technology, and not much has changed,” she says of Proverbs 7. The contrast between the “Wild Thing” and the “Girl Gone Wise” is explored through twenty chapters, appro-

priately beginning with the heart and the place Christ holds there: central or peripheral. (Kassian makes it clear that Christian girls and women are not immune to the influences around us, no matter how sheltered we may think ourselves.)

The twenty points of contrast begin with non-visible areas, such as the heart, and sources of counsel, and progress quickly (as they will do) to the more obvious ones of attitude, approach, and appearance. Habits (including priorities and routines) and body language (something women tend not to think about, especially if we feel we are modestly dressed) are contrasted using women of Scripture as well as more modern examples of the author’s acquaintance. Scriptural roles for men and women are clearly and carefully explained from the Creation account. Appropriately in the middle of the list comes the contrast between the sexual conduct of the Wise and the Wild, followed by a chapter on boundaries—placing wise safeguards versus leaving ourselves susceptible.

Thoughtfully proceeding verse-by-verse through Proverbs 7, Kassian addresses the issues of authenticity, neediness, possessions, speech, and others with gender-specific instruction. The final point of contrast is between teachability and a scornful unwillingness to be corrected and instructed, followed by a conclusion designed to give hope for the “Wild” who long to become “Wise.”

The author’s experience (embracing feminist ideology as a young girl and then repudiating it from a Biblical perspective) has equipped her to identify its strongholds 

Clothed

by Allen Faus

The word *clothed* denotes comfort and security as well as gender and integrity. From babyhood to burial, clothes are an integral part of the human family's needs.

The word *clothing* is also associated with occupation. From jobs in a factory to distribution, sales, and personal tailoring, people are involved in clothing. A significant portion of this country's economics centers on clothing. Choices of clothing which are offered range from work to formal, as well as stylish or plain.

The Greek word for clothed is *labesh*, which means "to wrap around, put on a garment, apparel, array, and wear." The first Biblical reference to clothes is found in Genesis 3:21. God made coats of skins to replace the apron-style clothes Adam and Eve hurriedly made after they sinned. The instinctive sense of nakedness and need of being clothed had begun. A spiritual loss equaled a physical loss. No longer were they clothed with innocence or perhaps heavenly glory. Perhaps it was sheep or goats that provided the coats as well as a sacrifice for sin.

GIRLS GONE WISE . . . cont'd.

as few of us can. She writes clearly and articulately and with a knowledge of the Scripture that I found challenging. Hers is obviously not a surface acquaintance with assumptions about Bible doctrines; she has dug deeply and well. While she is concerned about issues of modesty, her perspective on adornment would be that of the mainstream evangelical (for example, she suggests the consistent wearing of one's wedding ring as a "covenant hedge" for married women). Such applications of principle were infrequent; the teaching of Scripture was by far the central focus of the book, and I recommend it to you! ■

In Luke 8:5 we read of a man with unclean spirits. He is portrayed as a man of the cemetery, without a house, without clothes, and without God. At Jesus' rebuke the evil spirits fled, and the local people found him sitting at the feet of Jesus (probably engaged in conversation). He was in his right mind, and he was clothed.

Luke 12:28 says, "If God so clothe [enrobe] the grass, . . . how much more will he clothe [enrobe] you, O ye of little faith?" Growth, flowering, and persistence seems to be the meaning of "clothe the grass." In verse 27 He refers to lilies of the field being more beautiful and adequately clothed than even Solomon in all his kingly garments. How much more will He clothe [wrap] you with adequate clothes, beautifying your personality and intellect.

In Revelation 1:13 we read, John beheld "one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot." The long garment effectively concealed muscularity and physique. His hair was beautifully white while His eyes penetrated like flames of fire, thus drawing His face into focus.

When shopping for, sewing up, and wearing clothes, we need the same principles to which Adam and Eve were introduced. Does it conceal the nakedness and reveal the person? Is it adequately long as well as roomy? Do the style and colors leave our face to be the most prominent attraction of our body?

In our conservative circles we use the term "plain clothes," which means clothing that meets the need. When plain clothes are subject to the scrutiny of "enrobe" and "wrap around," we find ourselves able to make appropriate adjustments and encourage one another in the wholesomeness of applications well applied. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Mid-Atlantic Informer*, June 2011.

God Is . . .

by Mark D. Avery

Psalm 46 is addressed to the Chief Musician. Perhaps the writer realized the importance and profundity of the message of this song and wanted it sent to the highest musical official in the land.

“This psalm has been called Luther’s Psalm. It was that which he was accustomed to sing in trouble. When the times were dark; when the enemies of truth appeared to triumph; when disaster seemed to come over the cause in which he was engaged, and the friends of the Reformation were dispirited, disheartened, and sad, he was accustomed to say to his fellow-laborers, ‘Come, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm’” (Barnes).

Clarke discussed possible writers for this psalm and possible occasions for its writing and summarized it like this: “All I can pretend to say about it is, that it is a very sublime ode; contains much consolation for the Church of God; and was given by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit.”

I. Fact Number One: God Is . . .

God is our Refuge. A refuge is a shelter, a place of safety.

God is our Strength.

God is present in trouble. When His followers are in trouble, God’s there with them.

Our response to Fact Number One: We will not fear under certain circumstances. If the earth is removed, or the mountains are carried into the sea, or the waters roar out of our control, or the mountains shake, we will not succumb to fear.

We have confidence in God.

There is a river. Water is illustrative of grace. Grace makes us glad; it changes our attitude and our outlook.

The psalmist’s message is God is pres-

ent. He is with us in and despite our circumstances.

II. Fact Number Two: A River Is.

The Hebrew word can mean a small channel or stream of water as in irrigation. Water is often suggestive of the ministry of the Spirit. I need the refreshing irrigating of the Spirit.

The river makes “glad.” The word *glad* means “to lighten, brighten.” Sometimes this Hebrew word is translated “cheer up.”

To the psalmist, *city* could have meant “a city, an encampment, or a place where God’s people lived.”

Tabernacles were tents, places of residence for the Old Testament saints. Remember, the Spirit lives in believers.

God is still in the midst of His Church, His people (v. 5).

Result of Fact Number Two: “The LORD of hosts is with us.”

The word *LORD* (small capital letters) is a translation of the Hebrew word *Jehovah*, which means “the self-existent one.”

In some newer translations the phrase “LORD of hosts” is “the Lord of heaven’s armies.” It helps put life’s problems into perspective to know the Lord of Heaven’s armies is with us!

III. The Psalmist’s Challenge

Come and see. Taste and see that the Lord is good! What a privilege and challenge it is to offer Him to others.

The Lord makes wars cease. Christians, remember God is in charge in Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel, America, all the hot spots of the world, and all the other spots too. Where God goes, peace goes. He deals with the problem of world turmoil, but He

***The
psalmist’s
message is
God is present.
He is with us in
and despite
our circum-
stances.***

also deals with the problem of inner turmoil. He deals with world affairs, and He deals with heart affairs. He is in control—not just of wars fought with guns, tanks, airplanes, clean or dirty bombs—but also with the inner turmoil and unrest brought about by the challenges of daily news—economy, stock market, politics, unemployment, etc.

“Be still, and know.” Here is our difficulty. It is hard to be still in the busyness of life, but getting quiet before God is still the key to intimacy with Him.

Then God will be exalted among the heathen! Sinners recognize the presence of God among us. Key to effective evangelism is the presence of God in our lives and churches. God will be exalted in the earth.

The Lord of Heaven’s armies is with us! The God of Jacob is our refuge, the place where we are inaccessible to our enemy, our place of safety. ■

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PEACE AT ANY PRICE . . . cont’d from p. 37

“Peace at any price” is never the formula for friendship. Peace can only be established on fairness, forthrightness, and integrity, whether it be in one’s own heart or home, in church or society, or among nations. Peace is not a soft, sentimental thing, and peace is not achieved by wishful thinking, by kindly but mistaken do-gooders, or by the fear tactics of the “peacemongers” who are actually dangerous enemies of peace.

Jesus was not deceived by the easy way to power and glory Satan offered Him (Luke 4:5-8). Jesus said He came not to send peace on earth but a sword (Matt. 10:34), for men divide themselves over who He is. He did, however, deliberately take upon Himself the full suffering of the cross (John 10:17, 18) in order to establish the basis for true peace on earth, for “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). ■

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with Him.**

Trusting Christians

by George Quick

“I give up.” Have you ever felt like that? We don’t like to talk about it, but Christians give up all the time. We give up on our marriages, our jobs, our responsibilities, our church, our battle against sin, and even our faith in the Lord. Some fatally turn their backs on God and give up on life altogether.

One of the reasons for these tragic choices is often a misunderstanding of what the Christian life really is. When some believers come to Christ, they come with unrealistic expectations of a life without conflict. When God leads them down roads filled with trials, they cry, “This is

not what I signed up for!”

When we stop and think about it, it’s exactly what we signed up for. You see, we are sinners living in a sinful world with all of sin’s consequences. Pain, suffering, stress, sickness, and death are still at work. As long as we live in this world, we will have conflict. It’s by trusting God through these trials that He molds us into His image. For now we are to engage in the battle and overcome.

But here’s the problem. Many have been trying to fight the battles, but are getting beaten. Second Corinthians 2:14a says, “Now thanks be unto God, which always

causeth us to triumph in Christ.” This verse is like a dagger to their hearts. For some it’s been a long time since they were triumphant in Christ. Satan has used circumstances and sin to destroy their hope and trust in Christ.

So, what can be done to turn the tables on Satan and start winning daily battles for Christ? We must know that victory is not achieved by works. Trying harder or doing better will fail. First Corinthians 15:57 says, “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Our victory is in trusting Christ to work in us, not our own abilities.

This principle was illustrated in Matthew 14 when Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on water. Before we are too quick to criticize Peter for his failures, take a look at what he did. He had faith to step out of the boat onto a raging sea. Would you have stepped out of the boat? You may look at your circumstances and think that overcoming them is just as impossible as walking on water. You are correct. There is no reason for you or Peter to triumph over circumstances, except one. That one reason is Jesus Christ. If you trust Him, impossible circumstances become possible.

I really love the fact that when Peter was in the midst of the raging waves, Jesus was in the water with him. He is right there when we need Him to lift us up. Satan tries to get us to think that we are alone, and that God has forsaken us.

Wrong! Like Isaiah 41:10 says, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee.” Our God is with us when the going gets tough.

We all know that Peter sinned when he doubted and began to sink. But let me ask you a question: Was Peter a sinner before he started to sink? He sure was. When he was walking on the water he was a sinner. You see, we don’t have to be perfect Christians in order to triumph over sin. We just have to be trusting Christians. That’s why the Bible says, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). The key to victory is faith. Faith is choosing to believe that God will give sinners like us the victory.

As a child taking swimming lessons, I couldn’t believe what my instructor was saying. There was no way that I was going to turn over on my back and float. I had been paddling and kicking and doing everything I could not to sink. It just didn’t make sense that I could turn over on my back and float. But when I trusted my instructor and relaxed, guess what? I floated! I couldn’t believe it.

That’s exactly what Jesus does when we trust Him. The sin and circumstances that we fear are overcome through His power. Our circumstances might not change, but we sure do. We become confident, rejoicing Christians because Christ gives us the victory. ■

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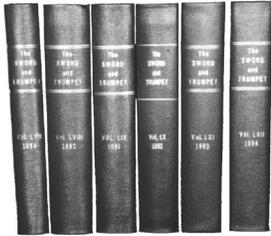


Simply trusting every day,
Trusting through a stormy way;
Even when my faith is small,
Trusting Jesus, that is all.
Trusting as the moments fly,
Trusting as the days go by;
Trusting Him whate’er befall,
Trusting Jesus, that is all.

—Stites



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