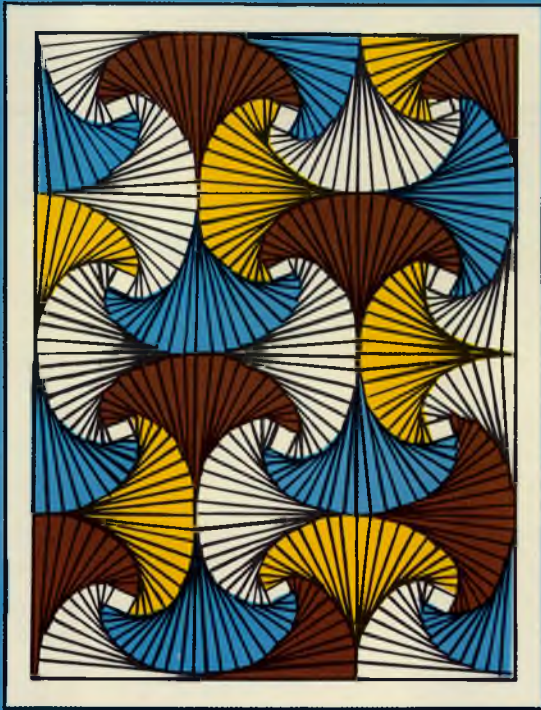


Conceptions Of Truth

Part II



*A straight line is the simplest
definition of a curve.*

— Albert Einstein

Collegiate Quarterly

October-December

1981

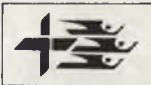
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My Brothers and Sisters:

It doesn't seem so long ago that I wrote you about projects in our Division. We asked your help for our schools in Sweden, Britain and West Africa.

Thank you for the record offering you gave. The projects in Sweden and Africa are completed and the one in Britain, nearly so. Without your help we could not have advanced the way we have.

This quarter we have three new Special Projects for which we ask your support. They are:

1. An evangelistic centre in Skoczow, Poland. Our church in Poland has many needs and opportunities. A climate of liberty and goodwill has enabled us to establish strong local churches. This centre will provide a place where the message we share can be presented to large audiences.
2. Rebuilding of Toivonlinna Junior College, Finland. Two old buildings desperately needing replacement, and the threat of closure because of safety requirements makes a new dormitory and dining block an urgent priority.
3. A child evangelism centre in Tromso, North Norway. With its nightless summers and dayless winters, North Norway provokes unique challenges in child evangelism. We hope to meet them in the largest city in North Norway with a centre which will provide for Vacation Bible Schools, Bible Story Hours, Pathfinder clubs and a day school. These will be missionary projects for the children of the city and will give us access to large numbers of non-Adventist families.

For Northern Europe we plead for your prayers that God's Spirit will be poured on the 45,000 members in these countries. The challenges are great; the opportunities are many. Your intercession will lift us toward a finished work.

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Inside: Conceptions of Truth

— Part II

Table with 2 columns: Article Title and Page Number. Includes items like 'Our High Priest', 'Judgment And Judge', 'Worship', etc.

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College Editors: David Neff
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Weekly Editors: Collette Joy Crowell
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Contributing Writers:

Glen Baker
Beverly Beem
Roland Blaich
Greg Brothers
John Brunt
Collette Joy Crowell

Jon Dybahl
Diane Forsyth
Joseph G. Galusha, Jr.
Glen G. Greenwalt
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Ulrike W. Meyer
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Mike Woods



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Chaplain: Ted Wick

College Editor: Randy Wiley

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Dale Culbertson
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Roland Hegstad

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Beverly Olivier

Edward Pruden
Karl-Heinz
Schroeder
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Facts About The Collegiate Quarterly

- Published with the approval of the General Conference Sabbath School Department.
- Discussion is centered around the same themes as the adult quarterly.
- Special attention is directed toward the expressions and needs of the college and university person.
- An intercollegiate project of the colleges and universities across North America.
- Approximately 200 professors, college students, pastors, church administrators and laymen have contributed articles for the quarterly.
- The international circulation of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY for the second quarter of 1981 reached 19,000.

How To Use The Collegiate Quarterly

1. The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is not designed to be just a supplementary quarterly. It is *the* Sabbath School quarterly for the college and university person—though many in other environments and age-brackets are also attracted to its use. So use it just like you would any other daily study guide or Sabbath School quarterly.
2. The Logos articles of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY have been condensed and rewritten from the corresponding weeks of the adult Sabbath School lessons. As the articles with the greatest Bible base, they most clearly reveal the central theme for each week and around them the other articles center their discussion.
3. Along with each daily discussion, a reference is given of a biblical passage for further Bible study. We encourage you to read these passages—even though some may be lengthy—as this will greatly enhance your study.
4. Do not accept every concept and emphasis made in the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY just because it is in the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY. For it can be dangerous to accept anything as truth, without personal investigation, simply because it has an organizational stamp of approval.

One goal of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is to aid in developing “thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.” To meet this goal, it is necessary to include within the pages of this quarterly challenging and stimulating material—which inherently may contain something with which you disagree. But that’s OK. Challenge the authors. Think. Prayerfully and critically question the material in each day’s lesson to determine the truth in the material for you.

UNION COLLEGE

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It's hard to believe, but soon the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY will be entering into its fifth year of publication. Beginning in the spring of 1978 with a one-week prototype, the concept of a Sabbath School quarterly written by and for the college person has developed into a project which now involves the talents of the entire Adventist college and university system of North America.

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY has pioneered a new method for studying the Sabbath School lesson. By viewing each weekly theme from six different perspectives, and by including representative writings from a broad spectrum of religious thought, the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY has attempted to encourage its Adventist audience to be "thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts."

But to do this has involved taking risks. It is risky to explore numerous viewpoints and various perceptions of the Word of God. But life involves risks. And the Christian life is no different.

Thus, we have appreciated the sensitivity of the Sabbath School and youth departments of the church in understanding the college person's need for critical and stimulating study of various issues—and for encouraging the publication of a Sabbath School quarterly to attempt to meet this need.

Recently, however, the Collegiate Publications Committee convened to evaluate how well this publication was meeting the needs of the college and university person, and to determine what necessary steps should be taken to better serve our target audience. Outstanding among many suggestions was a proposal to ask the Pacific Press Publishing Association to handle the printing, marketing and distribution of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY.

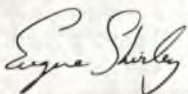
For three years now The College Press in Collegedale, Tennessee, has been printing and distributing the quarterly, and they have certainly done an excellent job. We have appreciated especially the gracious hospitality and generous cooperation we experienced in working with Mr. Noble Vining, the press manager. And we appreciate the efficiency and quality the press as a unit has shown in producing this journal for us.

But as subscriptions continue to increase, along with a demand for proper advertising and marketing, it appears to be nearly inevitable for the responsibility for printing, marketing and distributing the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY to be passed to the larger corporation.

As a COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY Committee member expressed, "Growth is inevitable. At times it is painful. And it always implies a risk." Indeed, it will be painful moving the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY from one of its "homes" in Collegedale, Tennessee.

So it is with mixed emotions that we move from the mountains of Tennessee to the mountains of California. To the former we say, Thank you for nurturing us and aiding us in our development and growth. To the latter we confess that we are excited at the prospects that are opening before us.

Sincerely Yours,



Eugene B. Shirley, Jr.
COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY Editor

Meditations On Truth

General Introduction to the Lesson

Thoughts for meditation upon the subject of truth while sitting in a grassy meadow, alone or with a couple of good friends:

That is truth which gives us courage to go on.¹ — Stanley Hauerwas

— — —

Christian beliefs are not so many 'propositions' to be catalogued or juggled like truth-functions in a computer, but are living convictions which give shape to actual lives and actual communities. We open ourselves to the possibility that the only relevant critical examination of Christian beliefs may be one which begins by attending lived lives. Theology must be at least biography. If by attending to those lives, we find ways of reforming our own theologies, making them more true, more faithful to our ancient vision, more adequate to the age now being born, then we will be justified in that arduous inquiry.² — James McClendon

— — —

"Jesus answered, 'You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.'

" 'What is truth?' Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews. . . ." — St. John

Perhaps what Pilate was searching for was a truth that could be expressed in static, rigid formulations. But what Jesus represented was the truth as a dynamic, living process. It is this truth which is always crucified.

— — —

Another attitude is summed up in the words Us-Them. Here the world is divided in two: the children of light and the children of darkness, the sheep and the goats, the elect and the damned.

Every social problem can be analyzed without much study: all one has to look for are the sheep and goats.

There is room for anger and contempt and boundless hope; for the sheep are bound to triumph.

Should a goat have the presumption to address a sheep, the sheep often do not hear it, and they never hear it as another I. For the goat is one of Them, not one of Us.

Righteousness, intelligence, integrity, humanity, and victory are the prerogatives of Us, while wickedness, stupidity, hypocrisy, brutality, and ultimate defeat belong to Them.³ — Walter Kaufmann

— — —

However we twist or turn, whatever instruments or pretensions we use, it is not possible to establish the claim that we have the truth. The truth remains subject to the paradox of grace. We may have it; and yet we do not have it. And we will have it the more purely in fact if we know that we have it only in principle. Our toleration of truths opposed to those which we confess is an expression of the spirit of forgiveness in the realm of culture. Like all forgiveness, it is possible only if we are not too sure of our own virtue.

Loyalty to the truth requires confidence in the possibility of its attainment; toleration of others requires broken confidence in the finality of our own truth.⁴

— Reinhold Niebuhr

— — —

Truth . . . does not stand and fall with us, does not live and die with us, is not right when we are right and wrong when we are deceived, does not triumph in our victory and fail when we are defeated. Truth is death poised above the cradle; it is life breathing o'er the grave. A Francis of Assisi is condemned by the Truth by

which a Caesar Borgia is set free. Therefore Truth deposes the mighty from their seats and exalts them of low degree. Therefore it can turn every human 'Yes' into 'No' and every human 'No' into 'Yes.'⁵

— Karl Barth

— — — — —

We must not think, 'Well, we have all the truth, we understand the main pillars of our faith, and we may rest on this knowledge.' The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light.⁶

— Ellen White

— — — — —

Because we are convinced by our own arguments we tend to assume all fair-minded people should be equally persuaded. It seldom occurs to us that the people may be honest and that our theology is faulty.⁷

— James Londis

— — — — —

Phone calls and letters bombard headquarters and leaders assume that where there is the smoke of dissatisfaction there must be the fire of heresy or disloyalty. It may be possible that the smoke of dissatisfaction is coming from the fires of ignorance.⁸

— James Londis

— — — — —

It is the refusal of alternatives . . . which makes wars . . . This mission of humility in social life is not merely to edify, but to *keep minds open to many alternatives*.⁹

— Thomas Merton

— — — — —

Sometimes, in moments of melancholy mood, I wish that God had never revealed anything to us. I wish for ignorance in revealed subjects—and not for myself only, but for the entire world. I wish that I would never have heard of orthodoxy; then I never would have known a heretic.

For truth the Christian church marched against the Moslems and Turks. For truth Adolf Hitler caused the death of millions. For truth Christian people and communities are often divided. For truth the modern nations have built enough nuclear bombs to annihilate all life over and over again and again.

All for truth! Could it be that God has made a mistake in revealing to us truth?

In these moments of melancholy desperation, right near the precipice of despair, I can always count on the Spirit of God to redirect my thinking.

He shows me His truth—a truth that enlivens and invigorates. A truth that is young and free and daring and courageous. A truth that is idealistic. A truth that has time for old people and children and all those who are not advantageous to the Gross National Product. A truth that pictures a hopeful future, and thus gives us courage to go on. A truth that sets free, and that is known only in experience with Him.

And by a miracle of divine grace, I once again become a lover of the truth.

¹ Stanley Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 80.

² James McClendon quoted in Stanley Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 81.

³ From Walter Kaufmann's Prologue, "I and You," in Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. Introduction copyright © 1970 by Walter Kaufmann; translation copyright © 1970 by Charles Scribner's Sons, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970). Reprinted with the permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

⁴ From Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. Copyright 1941, 1943, 1964 by Charles Scribner's Sons, copyright renewed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964). Reprinted with the permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 243.

⁵ Passages from p. 288 of *The Epistles to the Romans* by Karl Barth translated by E. C. Hoskyns (1933).

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1946), p. 33.

⁷ James Londis, "Can We Trust the Church's Theologians" in *Sligoscope*, April, 1981, p. 2.

⁸ James Londis, p. 2.

⁹ Quote from *The Non-Violent Alternative* by Thomas Merton. Copyright © 1971, 1980 by the Trustees of the Merton Legacy Trust, p. 215.

Our High Priest



"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession."

— Hebrews 3:1; NAS

by Greg Brothers

There are 702 songs in the *Church Hymnal*. Of these 702 songs, five deal directly with the priesthood of Christ. Of these five, I have sung none.

For "one of the most important truths in the Bible," the high priestly ministry of Jesus has attracted little attention. Other than the occasional sanctuary buff, most of us would describe Christ as King, Friend, Lord, or Savior. Few would say Priest. Even if "priest" should come to mind, it usually carries little meaning for our thoroughly Protestant everyday lives.

Now just because the high priestly ministry of Jesus is not often sung about at guitar-picking afterglows doesn't mean that it isn't important—or easy to understand. As a matter of fact, it can be summed up in eight single-syllable (and very important) words: Christ acts to put us right with God.

The Reformation started with the idea that *Christ* puts God and us back together. Since Jesus is our Priest ("priest" being a shorthand way of referring to a "put-back-togetherer") no other person or thing can fulfill this role—not a church, not a baptism, not a devotional life, not a cross, not even faith. We are saved because God, acting through Christ, wants us to be saved.

This doesn't mean that church, baptism, devotions, the cross and faith aren't important. All of these things are important—important enough that they have a way of taking on a life of their own. Important enough that one may easily come to believe that it is the pronouncements of one's church, the quality of one's own devotional life, the wood of the cross, or perhaps

the depth of one's faith that determines salvation.

That God acts in Christ to put us right with Him is the central fact of Christianity. Keeping that fact in mind keeps everything else in perspective.

Yet while the identity of Christ as Priest is important, so too is His work.

Years ago people came up with the idea of the Creator as the "Watchmaker." The thought was that God made the universe, wound it up like a clock and then walked off. Other than a casual interest in seeing what we do with His clockwork universe, God doesn't get involved.

Many of us believe in a "watchmaker savior." Jesus died and rose 2,000 years ago so that we might be saved. Since then He's just been sitting on that throne of His, waiting to see who might be saved.

But if Jesus is a Priest (and not just a sacrifice) that means that His work didn't stop 2,000 years ago. Salvation did not stop at the cross—salvation takes place whenever someone needs saving!

In the early 1970s, Congress passed a number of strict environmental laws. These laws were hailed as a means of ensuring cleaner air and water. Yet if it were not for a second phase of action, the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, nothing would have changed.

And in an analogous way, the establishment of such a "second phase of action" is what Christ's high priestly ministry means. For He has not just passed a "law of grace." As Priest He works to apply that law so that I might enjoy its benefits.

And *that* is something to sing about.

by editors

Notes

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” (Hebrews 3:1; NAS). The Epistle to the Hebrews stands unchallenged and without precedent in its depiction of the high priestly ministry of Jesus. The author portrays Christ as the divine-human High Priest who lovingly intercedes for His own.

This doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary has its roots in the Old Testament. As the Lord prepared Israel for entrance into the Promised Land, He directed **“Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it” (Exodus 25:8, 9).**

To today's sophisticated mind, the reason for the erection of this portable shrine—that the always-present One “may dwell among them” —may seem odd. But perhaps Yahweh understood the need of His people to have a localized, specific center where one could meet his God, offer adoration and gifts, obtain pardon and spiritual renewal, and receive His guidance for all aspects of group and personal life.

And perhaps it has been to satisfy our conceptual needs that God has revealed that we too **“have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:1, 2).**

The Levitical priesthood was instituted because of humanity's sinful condition, and was largely occupied with the offering of sacrifices for sin. Christ's priesthood is of a wider nature, for His office is eternal. His redemptive role will never be forgotten, and man's chief reason for gratitude will always be remembrance of the Savior's service in sacrificing Himself and in mediating for us in His priestly ministry. **“This means that he had to become like his brothers in every way, in order to be their faithful and merciful High Priest in his service to God, so that the people's sins would be forgiven” (Hebrews 2:17; GNB).** **“Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25; NAS).**

For **“Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24).** **“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).**

D.R.S./E.B.S.

by Glen Baker

 Key passage:
 Hebrews 4:16

Notes

**“Himself
 the priest,
 Himself
 the victim”**

Sin entered the world. God’s law had been broken. Death—complete separation from God—would be the result. But God had a plan for the salvation of humanity, typified in early Jewish culture by the sanctuary service. “As in the typical service the high priest laid aside his pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of an ordinary priest; so Christ laid aside His royal robes, and garbed Himself with humanity, and offered sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim.”¹

“Christ’s sacrifice in behalf of man was full and complete. The condition of the atonement had been fulfilled. The work for which He had come to this world had been accomplished.”² Yet His ministry continued in heaven. And with the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, this was revealed to the believers. “The great Sacrifice had been offered and had been accepted, and the Holy Spirit which descended on the day of Pentecost carried the minds of the disciples from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly, where Jesus had entered by His own blood, to shed upon His disciples the benefits of His atonement.”³

The concept of Christ as High Priest is not insignificant or irrelevant to twentieth-century Christians. Every believer should seek to understand it better, since “in 1844, Christ then entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, to perform the closing work of atonement, preparatory to His coming.”⁴ In fact, “the intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. . . . Jesus opened the way to the Father’s throne, and through His mediation the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God.”⁵

No longer does sin separate us from a holy God, for we have Christ as our mediator through whom we may continually have access to God and the throne of grace. “By His spotless life, His obedience, His death on the cross of Calvary, Christ interceded for the lost race. . . . His offering is complete, and as our Intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, these ascend to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression.”⁶

God’s act of reconciling Himself with humanity—made manifest in the cross and in Christ’s high priestly function—means our salvation. “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16; NIV).

¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 33.

² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³ *Early Writings*, p. 260.

⁴ *Great Controversy*, p. 422.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 489.

⁶ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 156.

by William G. Johnsson

Key passage:
Hebrews 8, 9

Notes

In a vivid passage in Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* the author describes his earliest recollections of the book of Hebrews.

"The extraordinary beauty of the language—for instance, the matchless cadences and images of the first chapter—made a certain impression upon my imagination, and were (I think) my earliest initiation into the magic of literature. I was incapable of defining what I felt, but I certainly had a grip in the throat, which was in its essence a purely aesthetic emotion, when my father read, in his pure, large, ringing voice, such passages as 'The heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest, and they shall all wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.' But the dialectic parts of the epistle puzzled and confused me. Such metaphysical ideas as 'laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works' and 'crucifying the Son of God afresh' were not successfully brought down to the level of my understanding. . . . The melodious language, the divine forensic audacities, the magnificent ebb and flow of argument which make the Epistle to the Hebrews such a miracle, were far beyond my reach, and they only bewildered me."

Gosse's childhood impressions of Hebrews are shared by most adult Christians. The language of temples, priests, and sacrifices evokes echoes of another culture, another age. Although the expression of Hebrews is grand and the flow of its argument inexorable, it falls on the modern ear like the strains of a foreign, fading melody.

Hebrews has been the stepchild of twentieth-century New Testament scholarship. Apart from the past 15 years Protestant exegetes have passed it by. Protestant commentators not infrequently remark that its conceptions are "primitive," "archaic," "outmoded." We have to step back nearly 100 years to locate the outstanding commentary on Hebrews—Bishop B. F. Westcott's, first published in 1889.

Two exceptions to this general neglect of Hebrews in the twentieth century are worth noting. Roman Catholic writers have shown a lively interest in the document—presumably the ideas of Hebrews find resonance with their form of worship. Often, however, Catholic commentaries exhibit a partisan interest, as attempts are made to find the Mass in Hebrews! In view of the argument of Hebrews which, in its total thrust, renders every human priest or priesthood null and void, this Roman Catholic interest in the book is surprising indeed.

The other Christian group to manifest a continuing study of Hebrews is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In keeping with the heritage of our pioneers, we have looked to Hebrews as the chief source of our distinctive doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary, with Christ as its minister in a two-phased service, the second phase commencing in 1844.

During the past two years Hebrews has become a storm center in Adventist scholarship. The gauntlet was thrown down in 1979 by Dr. Desmond Ford who argued that Hebrews does not support traditional Adventist sanctuary doctrine—in fact, it undercuts it because the author holds that Christ entered upon the second phase of His high-priestly ministry (in the heavenly Most Holy) at His ascension, not in 1844. Only in Hebrews, argues Ford, do we find the New Testament explanation of the Old Testament sanctuary services; if Hebrews therefore does not teach the pioneer Adventist view, that view is not to be found in Scripture.

I do not intend to embark upon a survey of argument and counter-argument as to the interpretation of Hebrews—my *In Absolute Confi-*

Roman Catholic writers have shown a lively interest in Hebrews

"We have looked to Hebrews as the chief source of our doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary"

dence (Southern Publishing Assoc., 1979) attempted to unlock the author's intent and meaning. Rather, here I shall briefly address two questions: (1) What is Hebrews really about? and (2) What meaning, if any, does it have for Christian life today? In fact, to answer these questions is to put the debate about Hebrews in a new (and, in my judgment, correct) setting—and one that may considerably mute current polemics.

It is easy to state what Hebrews is *not* meant to be: it is not a work of systematic theology. The apostle calls it "a word of exhortation" (13:22).* Despite the debates that rage over the meaning of Hebrews and the heavy theological ideas that the work embodies, Hebrews is intended to be a practical writing. It is a written sermon, addressing Christians who in many respects look like modern Adventists—grown sluggish in spiritual life, dwarfed, sliding back to the world, quitting going to church, forsaking the hope of the second coming (2:1-4; 3:7-19; 5:11-6:12; 10:23-39).

Now the author of Hebrews is not a desk-thumping preacher who merely berates, threatens, or cajoles. Rather, by a carefully-ordered theological development, he sets out the magnificence of the Christian religion. If his readers can grasp how precious is the Christian faith, they will be stirred out of their spiritual lethargy—their "tired blood" will surge with new vigor.

The magnificence of Christianity is presented by means of a set of arguments unique to Hebrews. "Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord" (8:1, 2). "Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (7:25). "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (10:19-22). While other books of the New Testament, particularly Revelation, allude to these ideas, nowhere else are they elaborated as in Hebrews.

Jesus Christ is our heavenly High Priest: this is the central affirmation. First mentioned at 2:17, the idea appears without explanation, suggesting that it was already familiar to the readers. So accustomed are we to it that the impact of 2:17 passes us by—only in Hebrews is Jesus designated as High Priest.

The fact of Jesus' high priesthood is worked through by a series of carefully wrought proofs. Chapter 1 establishes His full deity, chapter 2 His full humanity. Out of this conjunction arises the *possibility* of priesthood: in His own person Jesus, the God-man, can bridge the gulf between God and humanity. Chapter 3:1-6 establishes His faithfulness as Priest, 5:1-10 His mercifulness. The convoluted development of 7:1-28 shows that, although Jesus did not qualify to be a priest because He was not born of the tribe of Levi, He nevertheless falls under a higher order—Melchizedek's.

This discussion of Jesus as High Priest, finely reasoned and based on Old Testament proofs, points the reader to the splendor of His person. Its final word is this: not only is Jesus priest, not only is He a better priest, in fact He is the *only* priest. All who came before Him were but shadows, anticipations of the One who in His own person would touch both God and humanity.

The second half of Hebrews argues the superiority of the work of Jesus. He is minister of a better sanctuary, the heavenly (8:1-5); He is

"Hebrews is not . . . a work of systematic theology"

priest of a better covenant, the new one (8:6-13); and—here is the climax of the theology of Hebrews—He mediates a better sacrifice (9:1-10:18). As His person is unique, so is His offering. It is a once-for-all offering, one that can make full purification of sin. All sacrifices and offerings prior to it were but illustrations of it; with it they cease.

The “better blood” of Jesus (9:13, 14; 22; 10:1-4) brings two superlatives, reasons the apostle. First, it throws open the doors of the heavenly temple: by faith we have full, unhindered access to the presence of God. We do not come but once a year, as did the Aaronic priest in the earthly shadow-sanctuary on the Day of Atonement; nor do we come, hat in hand, in craven fear. We come “boldly,” “with full assurance,” because Jesus is High Priest for us (4:14-16, 10:19-22).

Second, His sacrifice deals thoroughly with the sin problem, purging the conscience of what A. C. Bouquet has termed “numinous uneasiness” —the constant sense of being out of harmony with God. Sin is a moral offence, not to be expiated by the blood of bulls and goats (10:4); for it God in Jesus Christ provided a unique solution.

Hebrews, then, rings with certainty—the *fact* of our heavenly High Priest, the *fact* of His sanctuary, the *fact* of His all-sufficient sacrifice. Over and over the key word is “better”: the religion that centers in Christ and His work surpasses every other system. Christianity is magnificent!

To gain this overview of Hebrews is also to see current Adventist debates about it in new perspectives. Many of the questions which both sides are putting to Hebrews in fact are invalid—they are *our* questions, not the apostle’s. He is certain of the reality of Christ’s high-priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, but his argument basically looks *back* from his time to what already has happened at Calvary. We usually read Hebrews and want to look *forward* from Calvary as we do so, seeking ammunition concerning the issue of the two-phased work of Christ. It is easy to wrest the text in such circumstances.

We may say that Hebrews *allows* for the two-phased work of Christ but does not develop it. The author alludes to future judgment but goes no further—his concern is with what Christ already has done and with His present heavenly ministry. In fact, we arrive at the Adventist sanctuary doctrine by combining related ideas from four books in particular—Leviticus, Daniel, Hebrews, and Revelation. Hebrews makes important contributions, although it does not spell out all aspects of the doctrine, especially eschatological ones. Nor should we demand that it do so: other important Bible teaching, such as the Trinity and the Sabbath, are obtained by combining indications from several books.

With this insight into the leading conceptions of Hebrews we begin to see its significance for Christian living today. The ideas of Hebrews uplift Jesus. They show how close to us He is, how concerned, how able to help. They perpetuate the blessings of the Incarnation, as our heavenly High Priest continually ministers on our behalf. He provides encouragement, empathy, help. None of us is so tested, none can feel alone, even God-forsaken, but He understands. He has been through it all.

Perhaps the ultimate value of Hebrews is this: it establishes the *objectivity* of our salvation. It removes our forgiveness, our standing with God, out of the realm of feeling and impressions. Whatever our emotions may tell us, Christ is in His heavenly sanctuary ministering for us. Yet a little while and he who once died an all-sufficient death, who now mediates above, will return for His people.

Truly, Christianity is magnificent! When we are captured by the power of these concepts from Hebrews we no longer see the book as a storm-center—it will be instead an “anchor of the soul” (6:19, 20).

“First, it throws open the doors of the heavenly temple”

“Second, this sacrifice deals thoroughly with the sin problem”

“We may say that Hebrews allows for the two-phased work of Christ but does not develop it”

“Hebrews . . . establishes the objectivity of our salvation”

* All texts used in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

by Collette Joy Crowell

It's not too difficult to make a profession of Christianity, but sometimes it seems impossible to act like one. The cross presents an overwhelmingly persuasive attraction—the simple promise of grace and forgiveness. But it doesn't take long to realize that we don't magically leave sin and selfishness behind the first time we accept God's gift. Because most of us don't wash away the tendency to sin in the baptismal water, we're left to face the grim truth: we are all sinners, both before and after conversion. Or more precisely, we are all sinning, struggling saints.

The role of Christ as High Priest, however, speaks directly to our Christian predicament of living as forgiven, but sinful people. This understanding of the ministry of Christ encourages us to respond to the paradox of Christian living in two ways.

1. To always remember the grace of God in Jesus Christ, regardless of our failure. As the human/divine mediator, Christ understands our weaknesses. In fact, I can imagine Him standing, as it were, at the door of the sanctuary gently encouraging us, "I was human and tempted too. Please don't give up. I will always forgive. My grace is sufficient. I will not let you go."

"It was necessary for Jesus to be like us, His brothers, so that He could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God, a Priest who would be both merciful to us and faithful to God in dealing with the sins of the people. For since He Himself has now been through suffering and temptation, He knows what it is like when we suffer and are tempted and He is wonderfully able to help us" (Hebrews 2:17-18; LB).

Nothing we have done or ever will do can disqualify us from being the recipients of God's everlasting grace. God through Jesus Christ has reconciled us to Himself. In spite of ourselves, His covenant with us is sure. Because Christ is the reconciler/mediator, we can affirm with Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, . . . nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39; NIV).

2. The understanding of Jesus Christ's ascension and mediatorial work in heaven reminds us that one day we shall be like Him—one day, sin, our personal and social sins, will forever be eliminated. Humanly speaking, the prospects for this are slim indeed. To hope to become people without pride, sloth or falsehood, to be people who recognize their limitations but don't worship the finite, who realize their freedom but don't consider themselves to be gods, to become people who live in balance and harmony with the rest of the created world, who respect and enter into relationship with the human and nonhuman world alike—to hope to become this type of people, a people without sin, may certainly seem unrealistic.

But Jesus Christ, the God/man, the man who is without sin, the man who has entered into the presence of God and worked reconciliation for us there, is the object and substance of our hope. By faith, in looking to Jesus, we Christians can see the day when sin will influence us no longer. And in this hope do we understand who we truly are.

Key passage:
Hebrews 4:14, 15

Notes

by editors

This week we have studied the writer of the book of Hebrews' interpretation of the heavenly ministry of Christ. The authors of this week's lesson have done a good job of showing the relevancy and significance of this metaphor. But I am still left with a feeling of, so what? Does it really matter whether I understand Christ as "High Priest," or comprehend His present ministry in other terms—friend, brother, or "put-back-togetherer," as Greg Brothers described it?

I don't think I have completely adequate answers in my own mind to these questions. But I can confess the way in which the symbolism of Christ as High Priest takes on the most meaning for me.

Because Jesus Christ stands in my place before God, what He is, that am I. The order to which He belongs, that too do I belong, for my life is hidden in His. Because He is Priest, so am I a priest. As He is High Priest, so are all who have been called to be Christians priests before God. Hence, the Protestant concept of the "priesthood of all believers."

It is in this understanding of myself and all Christians as being priests before God that I find the most significance in the Christ-as-High-Priest symbolism—because, to be a priest before the Almighty Creator means something very special.

To be a priest after the priesthood of Jesus Christ means to be elected to offer praise on behalf of all creation to the Divine. Out of all that God has made, only Christians know that God is Creator and that He is the Sustainer and Foundation of all that is. It may sound trite, but the nonhuman members of the animal and plant kingdoms obviously don't know who their Creator is—and neither can they praise Him. But God deserves praise to be returned to Him for His goodness in bending upward the boughs of the tree, gathering life in the mist, giving life to the newborn deer. So the Christian stands as a priest before God, praising Him on behalf of the plants and animals and all that He has created, for the wonders that He has performed.

Likewise, while all of humanity lives under the divine canopy of love, only Christians know of the grace of God and of this world's redemption. The Buddhist, the Hindu, the atheist, etc., are all unaware that God in Jesus Christ has reconciled them to Himself. Only Christians know of God's mercy and love towards all humanity as sinners. Thus, Christians stand as priests unto God on behalf of non-Christians offering to Him the praise and glory that is His due.

This praise that Christians as priests offer on behalf of human and nonhuman creation, however, not only takes the form of prayer, song, adoration and worship. This thanksgiving to God on behalf of all created beings is most pure when it is active in establishing and affirming that life and freedom which God has originally bestowed. This means that ecology is the Christian's concern, as well as working for the establishment of justice in society. For he recognizes the emptiness in those words which praise God for establishing something which man and society continue to selfishly exploit.

E. B. S.

Key passage:
I Peter 2:9**Notes**

"To be a priest . . . means to be elected to offer praise on behalf of all creation to the Divine"

REACT

1. Greg Brothers states in the Introduction for this week's lesson: Christ "has not just passed a 'law of grace.' As Priest He works to apply that law so that I might enjoy its benefits."

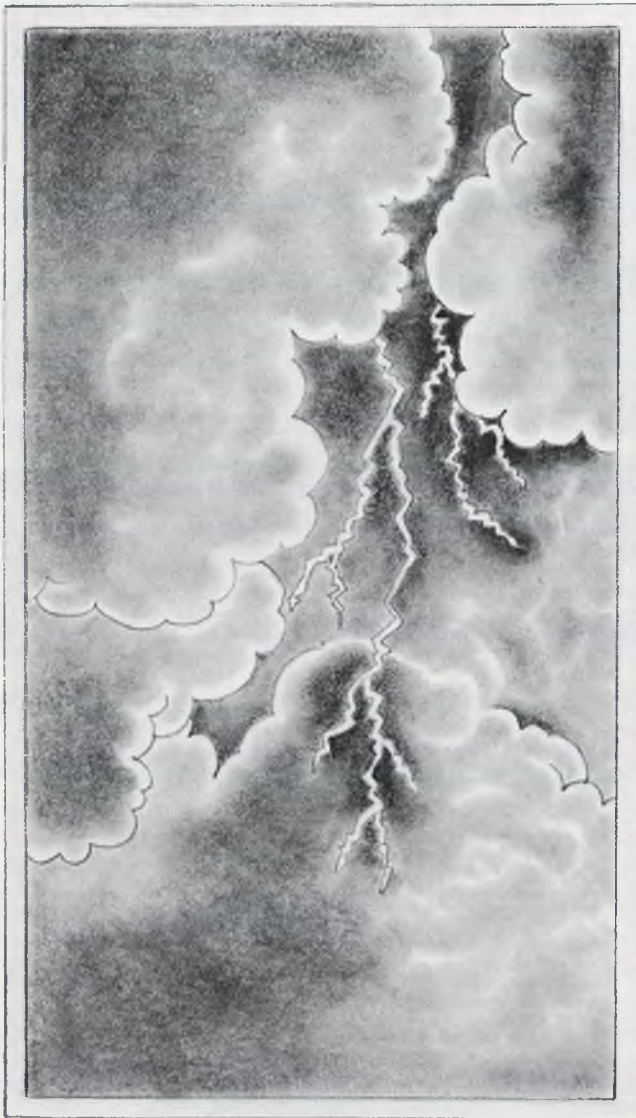
What does it mean for Christ to apply the law of grace? Is this referring to a heavenly ceremonial act? If so, why is it performed? For what purpose? If not, then what is the above statement implying? Explain.

2. Is it Christ's death on the cross and His subsequent high priestly ministry that save man, or is it simply the eternal grace of God that saves man, which is demonstrated in the cross and sanctuary service?

3. Relative to this week's Opinion article, could one properly claim priesthood after the order of Jesus Christ and not have ecological and social concerns?

4. It has been written that "Christ's death on the cross converts sinners, [and] His mediation in heaven sustains saints." Do you agree? Explain.

Judgment And Judge



"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. . . ."

— II Corinthians 5:10

by Stephen Travis

At the end of time, billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God's throne. Most shrank back from the brilliant light before them. But some groups near the front talked heatedly—not with cringing shame, but with belligerence.

"Can God judge us? How can he know about suffering?" snapped a pert young brunette. She ripped open a sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. "We endured terror . . . beatings . . . torture . . . death!"

In another group a Negro boy lowered his collar. "What about this?" he demanded, showing an ugly rope burn. "Lynched for no crime but being black!"

In another crowd, a pregnant schoolgirl with sullen eyes. "Why should I suffer?" she murmured. "It wasn't my fault."

Far out across the plain were hundreds of such groups. Each had a complaint against God for the evil and suffering he permitted in his world.

How lucky God was to live in heaven where all was sweetness and light, where there was no weeping or fear, no hunger or hatred.

What did God know of all that men had been forced to endure in this world? For God leads a pretty sheltered life, they said.

So each of these groups sent forth their leader, chosen because he had suffered the most. A Jew, a Negro, a person from Hiroshima, a horribly deformed arthritic, a thalidomide child.

In the center of the plain they consulted with each other. At last they were ready to present their case. It was rather clever. Before God

could be qualified to be their judge, he must endure what they had endured. Their decision was that God should be sentenced to live on earth—as a man!

Let him be born a Jew. Let the legitimacy of his birth be doubted.

Give him a work so difficult that even his family will think him out of his mind when he tries to do it. Let him be betrayed by his closest friends. Let him face false charges, be tried by a prejudiced jury and convicted by a cowardly judge. Let him be tortured.

At the last, let him see what it means to be terribly alone. Then let him die. Let him die so there can be no doubt he died. Let there be a great host of witnesses to verify it.

As each leader announced his portion of the sentence, loud murmurs of approval went up from the throng of people assembled.

When the last had finished pronouncing sentence there was a long silence.

No one uttered another word. No one moved.

For suddenly all knew that God had already served his sentence.

Jesus will be our Judge. "God has given him the right to judge, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be surprised at this; for the time is coming when all the dead in the graves will hear his voice, and they will come out of their graves: Those who have done good will be raised and live, and those who have done evil will be raised and be condemned" (John 5:27-29).¹

¹ Taken from *The Jesus Hope* by Stephen Travis. © 1974 by Word (UK) Ltd.; Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, pp. 60-61.

by editors

Notes

We speak of our first parents as living in surroundings equal to what we hope to one day live in ourselves—the earth made new. We term this soon-to-be-home “Eden-restored.” But an event lies between us and this bliss, the judgment. This is not an insignificant event; indeed, the testimony of the entire Scriptures bear witness to its importance.

The judgment theme in the Bible is present throughout, beginning with the story of Adam and Eve. For **“God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:28)**. Man and woman were placed in positions of responsibility before God on behalf of the created world. They were to be stewards of this earth, working for its fruition and good. Thus, they were *accountable* before God.

This judgment theme continues throughout the Old Testament and we pick it up again in Ecclesiastes: **“Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:13, 14)**. And we find a similar verse from Paul: **“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10)**.

Here we are faced with a little-talked-about feature of this inevitable judgment. Although Paul maintains that **“by grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8)**, he suggests above that humanity is judged on the basis of works. And Matthew quotes Jesus as saying much the same thing: **“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me in” (Matthew 25:34, 35)**. Clearly, a person’s reward in the judgment will be related to the good he or she has done in this world. Hence, Christ’s own words, **“If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15)**.

But there is another important aspect to this discussion of judgment: **“If a soul sin, . . . he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock. . . . And the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord” (Lev. 6:2, 6, 7)**. From the beginning of time, the covenant that God has established with humanity has, from His side, never been broken. And, even though sin has now entered this once pure world, God has taken this sin into Himself and conquered it. Thus, **“Behold, the Lamb of God” (John 1:29)**.

Therefore John can write with assurance, **“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (I John 2:1)**. And he can conclude: **“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (I John 3:13; italics supplied)**.

D.R.S./E.B.S.

by Kaarsten Lang

Too often we picture the judgment as a fearful and awesome day when a stern God metes out punishment. And certainly, the day of judgment will be awesome. In the writings of Ellen White, however, I have found two reasons why we should not fear this event. First, all will be judged by a loving and merciful God. She comments, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him. . . . For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man."

"The priests and rulers had set themselves up as judges to condemn Christ's work, but He declared Himself their judge, and the judge of all the earth. The world has been committed to Christ, and through Him has come every blessing from God to the fallen race. He was the Redeemer before as after His incarnation. As soon as there was sin there was a Saviour. He has given light and life to all, and according to the measure of light given, each is to be judged. And He who has given the light, He who has followed the souls with tenderest entreaty, seeking to win it from sin to holiness, is in one its advocate and judge. From the opening of the great controversy in heaven, Satan has maintained his cause through deception; and Christ has been working to unveil his schemes and to break his power. It is He who has encountered the deceiver, and who through all the ages has been seeking to wrest the captives from his grasp, who will pass judgment upon every soul.

"And God 'hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.' Because He has tasted the very dregs of human affliction and temptation, and understands the frailties and sins of men; because in our behalf He has victoriously withstood the temptations of Satan, and will deal justly and tenderly with the souls that His own blood has been poured out to save,—because of this, the Son of man is appointed to execute the judgment."¹

Second, Ellen White understands the judgment to be a determining factor in proving the righteousness and justice of the redeeming God. Commenting on the mission of Christ she says, "By the life and the death of Christ, the thoughts of men also are brought to view. From the manger to the cross, the life of Jesus was a call to self-surrender, and to fellowship in suffering. It unveiled the purposes of men. Jesus came with the truth of heaven, and all who were listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit were drawn to Him. The worshipers of self belonged to Satan's kingdom. In their attitude toward Christ, all would show on which side they stood. And thus everyone passes judgment on himself.

"In the day of final judgment, every lost soul will understand the nature of his own rejection of truth. The cross will be presented, and its real bearing will be seen by every mind that has been blinded by transgression. Before the vision of Calvary with its mysterious Victim, sinner will stand condemned. Every lying excuse will be swept away. Human apostasy will appear in its heinous character. Men will see what their choice has been."²

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 210.

² *Ibid.*, p. 57, 58.

Key passage:
I John 4:15-18

Notes

They wished to judge Him, but He declared Himself to be their judge

"Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints"

by editors

Key passage:
Psalm 139

Notes

Editor's Note: The God of judgment is the all-knowing God. His presence is inescapable. There is nothing from Him which one can hide.

But, by nature, we humans are not self-revealing—and we tend to dislike those who probe, who seek to reveal hidden, ugly motives, and who strive to find out who we *really* are.

Why then, should we not dislike God, the all-knowing Judge, the One who will “bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil” (Eccles. 12:14; NIV)? Paul Tillich, in the article that follows, discusses this concept of God as omniscient Judge and the natural human response to such a Being. He confesses his hatred for such a Witness against his inner-most self, and yet he admits a solidarity with the One who is the foundation of his being.

Although every reader of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY may not agree with all of Dr. Tillich's formulations, as an eminent theologian and one who has seriously reflected upon this subject, he deserves our consideration.

“WHERE COULD I GO FROM THY SPIRIT, and where could I flee from Thy Face?” These are the central words of the great 139th Psalm. . . . Let us consider this statement, and the powerful images in which the psalmist tries to express it. God is inescapable. He is God only *because* He is inescapable. And only that which is inescapable is God.

There is no place to which we could flee from God which is outside of God. “If I ascend to the heavens, Thou art there.” It seems very natural for God to be in heaven, and very unnatural for us to wish to ascend to heaven in order to escape Him. But that is just what the idealists of all ages have tried to do. They have tried to leap towards the heaven of perfection and truth, of justice and peace, where God is not wanted. That heaven is a heaven of man's making, without the driving restlessness of the Divine Spirit and without the judging presence of the Divine Face. But such a place is “no place”; it is a “utopia,” and idealistic illusion. “If I make hell my home, behold, Thou art there.” Hell or Sheol, the habitation of the dead, would seem to be the right place to hide from God. And that is where all those who long for death, in order to escape the Divine Demands, attempt to flee. I am convinced that there is not one amongst us who has not at some time desired to be liberated from the burden of his existence by stepping out of it. And I know that there are some amongst us for whom this longing is a daily temptation. But everyone knows in the depths of his heart that death would not provide an escape from the inner demand made upon him. “If I take the wings of the dawn and dwell in the midst of the sea, Thy Hand would even fall on me there, and Thy right Hand would grasp me.” To fly to the ends of the earth would not be to escape from God. Our technical civilization attempts just that, in order to be liberated from the knowledge that it lacks a centre of life and meaning. The modern way to flee from God is to rush ahead and ahead, as quickly as the beams before sunrise, to conquer more and more space in every direction, in every humanly possible way, to be always active, to be always planning, and to be always preparing. But God's Hand falls upon us; and it *has* fallen heavily and destructively upon our fleeing civilization; our flight proved to be vain. . . .

“Where could I go from Thy Spirit? O, where could I flee from Thy Face?” The poet who wrote those words to describe the futile attempt

of man to escape God certainly believed that man *desires* to escape God. He is not alone in his conviction. Men of all kinds, prophets and reformers, saints and atheists, believers and unbelievers, have the same experience. It is safe to say that a man who has never tried to flee from God has never experienced the God Who is really God. When I speak of God, I do not refer to the many gods of our own making, the gods with whom we can live rather comfortably. For there is no reason to flee a god who is the perfect picture of everything that is good in man. Why try to escape from such a far-removed ideal? And there is no reason to flee from a god who is simply the universe, or the laws of nature, of the course of history. Why try to escape from a reality of which we are a part? There is no reason to flee from a god who is nothing more than a benevolent father, a father who guarantees our immortality and final happiness. Why try to escape from someone who serves us so well? No, those are not pictures of God, but rather of man, trying to make God in his own image and for his own comfort. They are the products of man's imagination and wishful thinking, justly denied by every honest atheist. A god whom we can easily bear, a god from whom we do not have to hide, a god whom we do not hate in moments, a god whose destruction we never desire, is not God at all, and has no reality.

"Man desires to escape God"

Friedrich Nietzsche, the famous atheist and ardent enemy of religion and Christianity, knew more about the power of the idea of God than many faithful Christians. In a symbolic story, when Zarathustra, the prophet of a higher humanity, says to the Ugliest Man, the murderer of God "You could not bear him to see you, always to see you through and through. . . . You took revenge on the witness. . . . You are the murderer of God," the Ugliest Man agrees with Zarathustra and replies, "He *had* to die." For God, according to the Ugliest Man, looks with eyes that see everything; He peers into man's ground and depth, into his hidden shame and ugliness. The God Who sees everything, and man also, is the God Who has to die. Man cannot stand that such a Witness live.

"A god whose destruction we never desire is not God at all"

Are we able to stand such a Witness? The psalmist says, "O Lord, thou has searched me and known me," Who can stand to be known so thoroughly even in the darkest corners of his soul? Who does not want to escape such a Witness? And who does not want to become one who can deny God in theory and practice, an atheist? . . . God knows what we *are*; and He knows what we *do*. Who does not hate a companion who is always present on every road and in every place of rest? Who does not want to break through the prison of such a perpetual companionship? "Thou discernest my thoughts from afar. . . . Lord, there is riot a word on my tongue which Thou knowest not." The Divine Presence is spiritual. It penetrates the innermost parts of our own spirits. Our entire inner life, our thoughts and desires, our feelings and imaginations, are known to God. The final way of escape, the most intimate of all places, is held by God. That fact is the hardest of all to accept. The human resistance against such relentless observation can scarcely be broken. Every psychiatrist and confessor is familiar with the tremendous force of resistance in each personality against even trifling self-revelations. Nobody wants to be *known*, even when he realizes that his health and salvation depend upon such a knowledge. We do not even wish to be known to ourselves. We try to hide the depths of our souls from our own eyes. We refuse to be our own witnesses. How then can we stand the mirror in which nothing can be hidden?

"Nobody wants to be known"

Is the Ugliest Man right? The Ugliest Man is a symbol of the ugliness in each one of us, and the symbol of our will to hide at least something from God and from ourselves. The Ugliest Man seems to be right, when we consider the support he receives from saints, theologians, and

reformers. Martin Luther was as strongly grasped as the psalmist by the penetrating Presence of God. . . . He desired that God not be God. "I did not love God. I hated the just God . . . and was indignant towards Him, if not in wicked revolt, at least in silent blasphemy." Following St. Bernard, the great master of religious self-observation, he continued, "We cannot love God, and therefore we cannot will Him to exist. We cannot want Him to be most wise . . . and most powerful". . . .

The pious man of the Old Testament, the mystical saint of the Middle Ages, the reformer of the Christian Church, and the prophet of atheism are all united through that tremendous human experience: man cannot stand the God Who is really God. Man tries to escape God, and hates Him, because he cannot escape Him. The protest against God, the will that there be no God, and the flight of atheism are all genuine elements of profound religion. And only on the basis of these elements has religion meaning and power. . . .

Is there a release from that tension? Is it possible to overcome the hatred for God and the will that there be no God, that there be no man? Is there a way to triumph over our shame before the perpetual Witness and over the despair which is the burden of our inescapable responsibility? Nietzsche offers a solution which shows the utter impossibility of atheism. The Ugliest Man, the murderer of God, subjects himself to Zarathustra, because Zarathustra has recognized him, and looked into his depth with divine understanding. The murderer of God finds God in man. He has not succeeded in killing God at all. God has returned in Zarathustra, and in the new period of history which Zarathustra announces. God is always revived in something or somebody; He cannot be murdered. The story of every atheism is the same.

The psalmist offers another solution: "I praise Thee for the awful wonder of my birth. Thy work is wonderful. For Thou didst form my being, and weave me together in my mother's womb. None of my bones were hidden from Thee, when I was made in secret and molded in the lowest parts of the earth" The God Whom he cannot flee is the Ground of his being. And this being, his nature, soul, and body, is a work of infinite wisdom, awful and wonderful. The admiration of the Divine Wisdom overcomes the horror of the Divine Presence in this passage. It points to the friendly presence of an infinitely creative wisdom. It is this mood which runs generally throughout the Old Testament. A great scholar, with whom I conversed once on the will to death on every life, exhibited the same mood, when he said, "Let us not forget that life is also friendly." There is a grace in life. Otherwise we could not live. The eyes of the Witness we cannot stand are also the eyes of One of infinite wisdom and supporting benevolence. The centre of being, in which our own centre is involved, is the source of the gracious beauty which we encounter again and again in the stars and mountains, in flowers and animals, in children and mature personalities.

But there is something more to the psalmist's solution. He does not simply consider the creative Ground of his being. He also looks to the creative destiny of his life. "Thine eyes saw the sum total of my days, and in Thy book they were all written. They were counted before they ever came into existence. . . ." He expresses poetically what we today call the belief in an ultimate meaning of our life. Our days are written and counted; they are not merely accidental. He Who sees us most intimately looks at the vision of our whole life. We belong to this whole; we have a place of the utmost importance within it. As individuals and as a group, we have an ultimate destiny. And whenever we sense this ultimate destiny, whether or not it appears as great or insignificant, we are aware of God, the Ground and centre of all meaning. . . . The psalmist thus conquers the horror of the all-reflecting

"I did not love God. I hated the just God"
— Luther

"God cannot be murdered. The story of every atheism is the same"

"The eyes of the Witness we cannot stand are also the eyes of One of infinite wisdom and supporting benevolence"

mirror and the never-sleeping Witness by his recognition of the infinite mystery of life, its Ground and its meaning.

But suddenly, at the climax of his meditation, the psalmist turns away from God. He remembers that there is a dark element in the picture of his life—enmity against God, wickedness, and bloody deeds. And since this element disturbs his picture, he asks God to eradicate it. In sudden rage, he shouts, "If Thou wouldst but slay the wicked, O God, and make the men of blood depart from me, who oppose Thee in their thoughts, and utter Thy name in their crimes! Should I not hate them that hate Thee, O Lord? Should I not despise them? I hate them with the deadliest hatred. They are also my enemies!". . . . Praise turns into curse. And the trembling of the heart before the all-observing God is replaced by wrath towards men. This wrath makes the psalmist feel that he is equal with God, the God from Whom he wished to flee into darkness and death. God must hate those whom he hates; and God's enemies must be *his* enemies. He has just spoken of the infinite distance between his thoughts and God's thoughts; but he has forgotten. Religious fanaticism appears, that fanaticism which has inflamed the arrogance of Churches, the cruelty of the moralists, and the inflexibility of the orthodox. The sin of religion appears in one of the greatest Psalms. It is that sin which has distorted the history of the Church and the vision of Christianity, and which was not fully avoided even by Paul and John. Of course, we whose religious experience is poor and whose feeling of God is weak should not judge too harshly those whose lives burned with the fire of the Divine Presence and spread this fire ardently all over the world. Nevertheless, the sin of religion is real; and it contradicts the Spirit of Him, Who forbade His disciples again and again to hate His enemies as the enemies of God.

Yet, a change of thought and feeling brings the psalmist suddenly back to the beginning of his poem. He feels quite obviously that something may have been wrong in what he has uttered. He does not know what is wrong; but he is certain that God knows. And so he concludes with one of the greatest prayers of all time: "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any false way in me; and lead me the perfect way." At this moment he asks God to do what, according to the first words of the Psalm, he does relentlessly anyway. The psalmist has overcome his wavering between the will to flee God and the will to be equal with God. He has found that the final solution lies in the fact that the Presence of the Witness, the Presence of the centre of all life within the centre of *his* life, implies both a radical attack on his existence, and the ultimate meaning of his existence. We are known in a depth of darkness through which we ourselves do not even dare to look. And at the same time, we are seen in a height of a fullness which surpasses our highest vision. That infinite tension is the atmosphere in which religion lives. In that tension Luther conquered his hatred of God, when he discovered in Christ the Crucified the perfect symbol for our human situation. It is the tension in which modern man lives, even though he may have lost the way to traditional religion. A human being can be ultimately judged by whether or not he has reached and can stand that tension. To endure it is more horrible and more difficult than anything else in the world. And yet, to endure it is the only way by which we can attain to the ultimate meaning, joy, and freedom in our lives. Each of us is called to endure. May each of us have the strength and the courage to bear that vocation! For it is to that vocation that we are called as men.

"He has just spoken of the infinite distance between his thoughts and God's thoughts; but he has forgotten"

"The sin of religion contradicts the Spirit of Him, who forbade His disciples to hate"

"We are known in a depth of darkness through which we ourselves do not even dare to look"

From Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*. Copyright 1948 by Charles Scribner's Sons; copyright renewed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948). Reprinted with the permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, pp. 40-51.

by editors

Key passage:
Ezekiel 34:20-22

Notes

"All sin has its being and origin in the fact that man wants to be his own judge."¹ So wrote the eminent theologian Karl Barth in reflection upon the doctrine of reconciliation. To him, pride is not the fundamental sin—as it is often termed. Rather, all sin is but the manifestation of the one inherited desire of each person to be his or her own judge. Because of this, God reveals Himself alone to be the Judge—the only ultimate criterion.

This concept of God alone as Judge means a number of very important things:

1. First, it means that God is with us—that we have not been forsaken. Judgment means that God cares enough about us to judge us!

God could have chosen not to be affected by us humans and left us spinning to our doom on this cosmic speck. Then, there would be no judgment to come indeed.

But God loves us; He has claimed us as His own, He has reconciled us to Himself. And *because of this*, we come under judgment. For judgment is a post-reconciliation word. It can only be spoken *after* humanity has been claimed by God as His own. It is only *after* God says, "You are mine, I have identified Myself with you," that He may then call us into His chamber of justice. Thus, the most fundamental definition of the concept of judgment gives a message of love and hope.

2. Second, for God alone to be Judge means that we individuals are not the judges of ourselves. In Jesus Christ God has judged us and rendered both a negative and a positive verdict. He has rejected every manifestation of pride, sloth and falsehood, but He has accepted every human being.

Man, however, in his persistent efforts to be his own judge, seeks to deny both God's rejection and acceptance. He accepts that which God has condemned, and rejects that which God has offered. But such is the perennial nature of man—desiring to be the Judge.

3. For God alone to be the Judge also means that we are not the judge of others. And how disappointing this is to everyone of us, for we all like to be thought of as competent to make ultimate determinations.

While we judge ourselves righteous, it is a constant temptation to want to judge others guilty. While we judge ourselves or the institutions we are a part of to be on the side of truth, honesty, integrity, ultimacy and holiness—indeed, on the side of God Himself—we judge "others" —i.e., those who are different from the way we are—on the side of heresy, error, deceit, temporality and the devil himself.

This human passion is particularly prevalent in war-time situations when opposing nations conceal their own guilt and unreasonableness by highlighting the evilness of the other *vis-à-vis* their own self-proclaimed righteousness. It is evident in the ultimate political judgment "Better dead than Red." And it is obvious in those who claim to have a corner on "truth."

If the United States were judge, then "police action" in Southeast Asia to "prevent the threat of communism" could be justified. If the church were judge, then heresy could be labeled as such and destroyed—along with its proponents if need be. But in the reconciling act of God in Jesus Christ, God has shown Himself alone to be the Judge. And any attempt of human beings or organizations to make ultimate determinations is a manifestation of sin.

4. Because God alone is Judge, we can take our lives less seriously.

Hampered with the burden of feeling that we must make the ultimate determinations in life, we seek to shield ourselves, as Erik Erikson has said, "from the common burden of living guiltily and absurdly."² It is a common temptation to judge ourselves as so important and significant—to judge our place in the universe as the fulcrum of all history, to judge our history as holy history, our time as holy time. But God alone is Judge. And thus we are freed to take life less seriously. We are freed to laugh at ourselves, to take risks and to risk failure. In Jesus Christ we see our philosophies and dogmas and theories and righteousness condemned—crucified—exposed—exposed as manifestations of pride, of our desire to be the Judge.

But God alone is Judge. And in this understanding do we indeed see ourselves in all of our guilt and in all of our absurdity.

5. Finally, because God is Judge, He has established our future and the substance of our hope, and this is in Jesus Christ. Because we desire to be the Judge, we attempt to decide for ourselves what there is to hope in. Some hope in humanity itself, some in technology, some in sensual pleasures and some in their own creative genius. But God as Judge has determined that humanity's hope and destiny is in Himself alone.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our destiny is to be "with God." In Jesus our past has been overcome, and our future has been determined. Thus, it is the Christian's prerogative, indeed, it is part of his very essence, to hope for the realization of the complete manifestation of the glory of God. For "The faith of the community in the world is . . . essentially bound up with hope, with the confidence that the reality which is now believed will be seen."³ As said the apostle Paul, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:2-4; NIV). "But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope" (Gal. 5:5; NIV). And said Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Peter 1:3).

E.B.S.

¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Tr. by G. T. Thomson, Vol. IV, Part I (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 220 and 330 respectively.

² Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., New York, © 1969, p. 250.

³ Barth, p. 330.

by Jon Dybdahl

Key passage:
I John 4:17, 18;
Revelation 19:1-3.

Notes

The certainty of judgment is a biblical teaching. Leon Morris clearly spells out this fact in the following paragraphs:

"Men today often have difficulty with the idea of a day of judgment for the whole earth. The mechanics of it trouble some, and the concept of God as a Judge bothers others. Like the Greeks of antiquity, they reject the whole idea, but the men of the New Testament were troubled by no such scruples. On the contrary, they held it to be fundamental and basic that God will judge all men. If God be God, He must judge all creation. . . . The final judgment is not something that must be argued for. It is something that may be argued from. Paul assumes that there will be no dispute about this. It is common ground for all Christians. The writer to the Hebrews takes up much the same position when he speaks of 'eternal judgment' as one of 'the first principles of Christ' (Heb. vi. 1f.). Again Paul can make this final judgment the basis of an exhortation to his converts not to be harsh in their estimates of other people. It matters little, he says, that you should pass judgment on me, or for that matter, that any human tribunal should do so. . . . 'He that judgeth me is the Lord. Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come' (I Cor. iv 3-5). That is to say, judging one another or even judging one-self is completely futile. . . .

"Judging one another or even judging one-self is futile"

"The certainty of judgment is deducible from the fact that Jesus unquestionably thought of Himself as the Messiah. He did not understand Messiahship in the same way as did the Jews of His day, but He knew that He was the Anointed One. It appears to have been universally held by those who looked for the Messiah that His coming would usher in a period of judgment and tribulation which they called 'the woes of the Messiah.' That Jesus did not repudiate this view is abundantly clear from His teaching on the second advent and the judgment He would then accomplish (Mt. XXV. 31ff.; Jn. v. 22, 27ff.). Messiahship does not exclude but rather implies judgment."¹

For the believer in Christ the judgment can be a fervently hoped-for time of vindication. The apparent success of Satan and sinners in this world will be shown to be a temporary illusion. Christ and His kingdom will triumph. The day of reckoning will usher in an era in which the believer will live and reign with Christ in a world free of the conflict between good and evil. For the Christian, then, the judgment is supremely a day of hope.

By way of contrast, for the worldling the day of judgment is one of weeping and gnashing of teeth. New Testament writers used the judgment to warn sinners. An example of this is Paul's mention of coming judgment to Governor Felix (Acts 24:25). Since a day of deciding man's destiny is coming, unbelievers should soberly examine their lives and ask how they stand with God.

The tragedy is that many *Christians* today view the judgment as the New Testament expected *unbelievers* to see it. They behold it with trembling fear rather than expectant hope. On the other hand, unbelievers, who should be warned by the fact of what is to come, are ignorant of it or deny its very existence. Informed Christians today should so proclaim judgment that it may be understood as it was in apostolic times.

¹ Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment*, (The Tyndale Press, Wheaton), © 1960, pp. 54-56.

REACT

1. Kaarsten Lang, in this week's Testimony article, writes: "Ellen White understands the judgment to be a determining factor in proving the righteousness and justice of the redeeming God." But how is it possible for humans to prove *anything* about God? Must not one assume a position above something in order to prove a statement about it? And doesn't the doctrine of God alone as Judge prohibit any judgment of Him? Explain.

2. Paul Tillich, in the Evidence article for this week's lesson, states: "A god whom we can easily bear, a god from whom we do not have to hide, a god whom we do not hate in moments, a god whose destruction we never desire, is not God at all, and has no reality."

What is your reaction to this statement? Explain.

3. The How To article for this week makes the point that because God alone is Judge, we can take life less seriously. This is not a traditional implication drawn from the concept of God as Judge. But do you agree with this idea? Explain.

The How To article also states that "For God alone to be the Judge . . . means that we are not the judge of others." What does this mean to you? List examples of those areas in which the Christian may legitimately judge, and then examples of those areas where judgment is prohibited.

Legitimate Judgment

1.

2.

3.

Prohibited Judgment

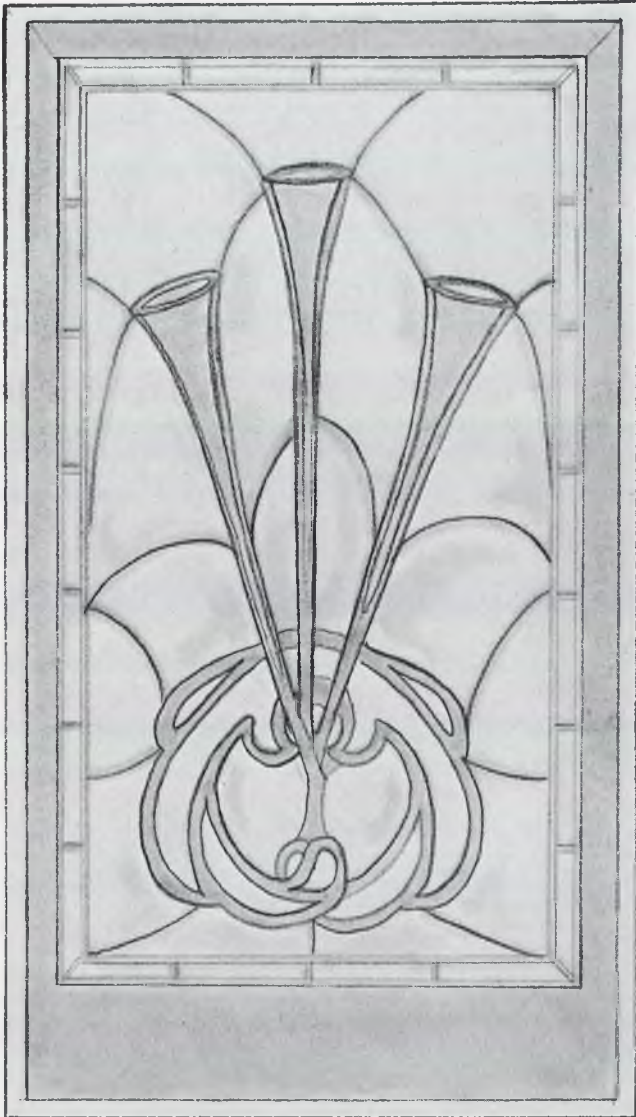
1.

2.

3.

4. The author of this week's Opinion article states: "Informed Christians today should so proclaim judgment that it may be understood as it was in apostolic times." Do you agree? Or should the concept of judgment be understood relative to our own contemporary age? Or is there a difference here?

Worship



"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

— John 4:23

by Julie Woods, et al.

Serendipity:

(ser' ən dip' i tē), *n.* the faculty for making desirable discoveries by accident.¹

I remember last spring, on one of those blue-skied Sabbath mornings, a friend and I took a breakfast picnic to the park. The sunshine whisked the dew off the weeping willows, and the breeze rustling through the trees sounded like chimes. It was definitely a morning for a poem or two. We ate and talked, laughed and prayed. Although the prayers weren't altogether spontaneous or natural, we felt warmer and happier having said them. God had silently slipped up and was enjoying the morning with us.

Serendipity.

Once it happened in the cafeteria at lunch. I had just decided that Saucette Surprise was not worth the risk, when I ran into an optimistic old friend—the kind that eats Saucette Surprise and enjoys it. That particular day I thought I could handle his optimism, so we sat together. He thought I seemed depressed, so he tried to convince me that I was going to survive my

final tests the following week. Once or twice he even reminded me of an outside Source I might rely on a little more. I left that meal happier than I had been in a long time. I went back to my room and had a thankful talk with Someone very special.

Serendipity.

Two examples. They weren't planned or scheduled, but they resulted in two of the most meaningful periods I've ever spent with God. Those serendipitous times transformed my daily worship experiences from cold, regimented affairs, into periods of warm, heartfelt communion—into experiences of true worship.

This week, we are going to look at the threefold call to worship God as seen in the context of the three angels' messages. The purpose of this study will be to lead us to higher and more genuine forms of worship. And our purpose can be met if the Lord chooses to surprise us with His presence.

Serendipity.

¹ The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, © 1967.

by editors

Notes

Man's highest end is to worship and glorify his Maker. Man was made for worship, and he was made for praise. Only in these does he find his destiny.

Evil, void and chaos, however, also seek worshipers. Such was the temptation even to the Son of God (Matthew 4:9). Thus, in the three angel's messages of Revelation 14, we find each message concerned with this crucial subject of worship—worship true and false.

The first of these angels John saw flying in the midst of heaven **"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water"** (Rev. 14:7).

The core of this message is "Fear God and give glory to him." As man has historically often cried out in reference to himself, "Glory to Man in the Highest! For Man is the master of things,"¹ this call to reverence and worship the Creator alone is particularly forceful. The first angel calls on humanity to repudiate its egotism and to acknowledge God's primacy, to give to Him alone adoration, respect, obedience, service, trust and love.

The second angel John saw in his apocalyptic vision was shouting, **"Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication"** (Rev. 14:8). Traditionally Adventist theology has seen in Babylon the characteristics of the church of papal Rome. But relative to the context of worship, Babylon may be identified as symbolically representing any idolatrous form or system. Given this definition, we all stand condemned for drinking "of the wine . . . of her fornication." For we are all guilty of holding as ultimate—and thus as idols—sensual pleasures and creative ingenuity, religious customs, doctrines and rituals, and even our conceptions of God. We often equate our interests, our perspectives, our convictions with those of the divine, and thereby do not allow Him to transcend and supersede our own formulations—our idols—our Babylons.

But the message of the second angel is that Babylon has fallen. The idols we have formed in our own image are not appropriate for worship.

The third angel of Revelation 14, following the other two, John quotes as saying, **"If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God"** (Rev. 14:9, 10). This message of the third angel is but the anticipated conclusion to the messages that have gone before it, for it proclaims the judgment of God upon all the creations of man that claim ultimacy—equality with God Himself.

Some see these divine judgments as having already fallen upon this earth in a very real way. Because society has seemingly worshiped as ultimate the amount of petro-energy produced, the judgments of God have burned our eyes and congested our lungs. Because we have worshiped our way of life as definitive, the judgments of God have fallen upon our soldiers in foreign lands.

But the message of the three angels is a recall to worship—to worship that which is totally beyond ourselves—that which transcends our speculations and ambitions—to worship Him alone who is our ultimate concern.

D.R.S./E.B.S.

¹ A. C. Swinburne, "Hymn of Man," in *Oxford Book of Quotations*.

by editors

When Ellen White reflected upon the subject of worship, she was not at all content with the staid formalism that apparently surrounded her. Worship, to her, did not consist in repeating certain words or mimicking ancient traditions. Worship was seen as a way of life—an attitude towards God, expressed in one's relationship to Him as well as to others.

Fundamentally, worship, she says, "consists in working together with Christ. Prayers, exhortation, and talk are cheap fruits, which are frequently tied on. . . ." But true worship is made manifest "in good works, in caring for the needy, the fatherless, and widows. . . ."¹

In the *Testimonies* she continues this line of thought: "From what has been shown me, Sabbath-keepers are growing more selfish as they increase in riches. Their love for Christ and his people is decreasing. They do not see the wants of the needy, nor feel their sufferings and sorrows. They do not realize that in neglecting the poor and the suffering, they neglect Christ, and that in relieving the wants and sufferings of the poor as far as possible, they minister to Jesus.

"To become a toiler, to continue patiently in well-doing which calls for self-denying labor, is a glorious work, which Heaven smiles upon. Faithful work is more acceptable to God than the most zealous and thought-to-be holiest worship. It is working together with Christ that is true worship."²

Discussing worship in more conventional terms, Sister White maintains the following: "To the humble, believing soul, the house of God on earth is the gate of heaven. The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ's representatives, are God's appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for that loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defileth. . . ."

"The house is the sanctuary for the family, and the closet or the grove the most retired place for individual worship; but the church is the sanctuary for the congregation. There should be rules in regard to the time, the place, and the manner of worshiping. Nothing that is sacred, nothing that pertains to the worship of God, should be treated with carelessness or indifference. In order that men may do their best work in showing forth the praises of God, their associations must be such as will keep the sacred distinct from the common, in their minds. Those who have broad ideas, noble thoughts and aspirations, are those who have associations that strengthen all thoughts of divine things. Happy are those who have a sanctuary, be it high or low, in the city or among the rugged mountain caves, in the lowly cabin or in the wilderness. If it is the best they can secure for the Master, He will hallow the place with His presence, and it will be holy unto the Lord of hosts."³

D.R.S./E.B.S.

Key passage:
Acts 10:38;
James 1:27

Notes

"It is working together with Christ that is true worship"**"Happy are those who have a sanctuary, be it in the city or among the mountain caves"**¹ *Christian Service*, p. 96² *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 24.³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 491-492.

by Roland Blaich

According to Ludwig Feuerbach in his *The Essence of Christianity* our image of God reflects our highest ideals and values. Hence, he argues, God is a mere projection of the human mind.

While his conclusion may be wrong, his thesis does contain elements of truth. Our knowledge is limited to what we can experience with our senses. This has essentially to do with the temporal and phenomenal. What revelation we have in Scripture concerning the spiritual world is presented in terms of that temporal or earthly experience. Our image of God then is necessarily tied to our experience of this world, to the way we experience it, to our values, and to our capacity to understand. Since these factors vary from person to person, so does, as it were, our God.

There is nothing wrong or dangerous in the fact that we each have a different concept of God. It is God, after all, who has made us each to be unique, and who leads us through different experiences to diverse insights. It may even be part of God's purpose in creating this diversity to help us guard against the temptation to confine God to the level of our understanding. For, as God is far greater than any of us can possibly grasp, the diversity of views reminds us of the partial and tentative nature of our knowledge. Thus, people with different beliefs are not a threat but a challenge, and an opportunity to grow. They help us never to become complacent, never too comfortable in our knowledge, and never too sure of ourselves.

What we must therefore guard against is mistaking our own image of God for God Himself. This can and does happen all too easily. Basic beliefs regarding God's will as manifested in Scripture and expressed in church doctrine can easily be confused with God and assume His place in our worship. So can the church assume a position equal with God. Indeed, so can all things we associate in our minds with God. In the words of William Stringfellow, "The practice of religion for its own sake is *always* idolatrous."¹ When anything that is finite and nonultimate, however good and true, takes the place of God—the ultimate—it becomes a false god, and our worship becomes idolatry.

In theory, worship and idolatry may be clearly distinguished from one another. In practice, however, they can be easily confused. But that confusion may be least likely to happen where we remain conscious both of human finitude and divine infinity.

¹ *A Private & Public Faith* by William Stringfellow. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 49503. © 1972. Used by permission, p. 13.

Key passage:
 I John 5:21

Notes

God is a mere projection of the human mind
 — Feuerbach

"Thus, people with different beliefs are not a threat but a challenge, and an opportunity to grow"

"The practice of religion for its own sake is *always* idolatrous"
 — Stringfellow

by David Neff

Key passage:
Revelation 4 & 5

Notes

You wear your Sabbath best. You sit down within a few feet of where you always sit. You smile at the people around you. You are opening your bulletin when suddenly it hits you. That sense of *deja vu*. You've been here before. Not just the same place, but the people and the spirit and the well-ordered events and even the pastor's brand-new sermon title smell remarkably familiar. A yawn—ever so slight—stretches itself across your face. Another worship service. If you've been wondering how to stay awake in public worship, here are some hints for you.

1. Expect something to happen and open the way for it to happen. Some churches encourage their members to kneel immediately upon entering the pew. Although this is not so common among Adventists, it is a good way to stop your racing mind and focus it on what you expect to happen between you, God and your fellow worshipers.

For, although our bodies rest from physical labor on the Sabbath, our minds are constantly making rapid detour into the underbrush. It is no wonder then that we do not hear God's voice. It is no wonder our relationships are not healed. It is no wonder all these services seem the same. We are at worship physically, but not always spiritually. It is no wonder we are underwhelmed by it all. So sit still and be still. Let God know you expect Him to speak, and He will.

2. Expect to give something as well as to get something. It is an interesting experiment to have people diagram the arrangement of the participants in worship—the clergy, the choir, the congregation. Inevitably, someone omits the most important person—God. Where do you put God? On the altar? On stage? In the baptistry? In the pulpit? No. God is the audience. We are the performers on stage. Does that sound strange? If it does, look up Revelation 4-5 where the apostle pictures heavenly worship. Worship in heaven consists of angels, odd-looking creatures, and everyone in heaven and earth singing praises to God. He is the audience. They are providing Him with the program.

When you go to public worship, you are going not to listen but to perform. Your church musicians, deacons and pastor are the people who coordinate the group. But you are part of the cast of thousands John saw in the Revelation extravaganza.

If you want to be blessed in church, bless God for His power and wisdom and might and honor and glory. Take those hymns and prayers seriously. They are not time fillers. They are your words to God. Pay attention to what you say.

3. Expect worship to last more than 60 minutes. But 60 minutes is as long as I can sit on those hard pews! Sorry. I didn't mean to imply more than an hour of sitting. I meant that you should plan to continue worshipping God when you leave the church building. The prophets of Old Testament times let the worshipers know that God was far more interested in their treating everyone fairly than in their burning bulls and incense under His infinite nostrils. Your prayers and hymns are just the warm-up. They are important, but your daily service is even more important. Take God with you into your work a day world. Offer to Him the acts of love you give your fellow humans. Then you can expect much more from your weekly meeting for worship.

by Dale Hepker

Key passage:
Revelation 14:12

Notes

The three angels' messages are God's call to renew *bona fide* worship of the Creator during earth's last days. The world needed such an emphasis in the mid-1800's. Surely it needs it today.

When we study the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in England, for instance, we observe the spiritual poverty of the English church and man's various attempts to alleviate his deplorable spiritual and physical conditions. Novelists such as Jane Austen portray the ineffectual ministry of parish priests, who held their positions through a corrupt appointment system. From these depths we trace the rise of the evangelical movement, the calls for prison reform and the abolition of slavery, and the emphasis upon converting the heathen. Utopian schemes flourished.

In the dictionary we find stock definitions of worship inherited from that period—definitions that mirror the sad condition of the church. John's revelation points out the error of such cold, lifeless, and ineffectual worship. The three angels' messages are calls to worship God in full, complete dedication to Him—not with an isolated experience at Easter or Christmas, or even once a week, but holy worship, a lifestyle that permeates all daily activities. This lifestyle is different—not odd, but unique, attractive, admirable and blessed by God.

In striving for godliness, however, some people unknowingly worship the lifestyle instead of the Creator. They obey the "thou shalt nots" of men and forget the God of fairness, sympathy and love.

Likewise, in the seats of government and learning today, men eagerly follow philosophers and philosophies, but not God. Even in the church similar problems exist. Not long ago one of my friends, speaking of a prominent Adventist minister, declared, "If he ever left the church, I'd have to go with him because he is absolutely right." What a tragedy that men follow the gospel according to men, but not the gospel according to God. Others should be instrumental in refocusing our thoughts, in changing our opinions, or in suggesting new interpretations of Scripture. But we must be disciples of Jesus alone. This idea is basic to understanding the three angels' messages. We must guard against becoming followers of men, who were made in the image of God, instead of being followers of God. Like some devotees of partisan politics, we may corrupt ourselves and pursue error instead of truth by following "cunningly devised fables" (I Peter 1:16).

A pure lifestyle, generated by a clear perception of these messages, will withstand the taunts of the scoffers in the last days who "walk after their own lusts" (II Peter 3:3). This way of life will be typical of those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). These people will come into harmony with His will so completely that they will dress, look, speak and act in such a way that there can be no question but that they worship the God of heaven.

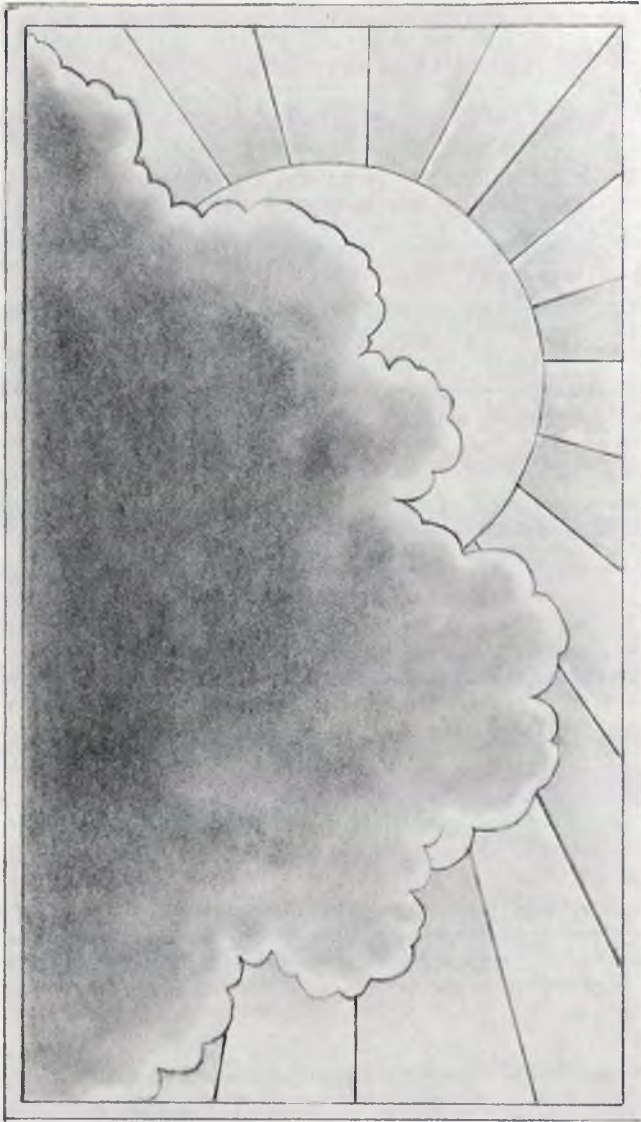
REACT

1. Think back on meaningful worships you have had. What made them significant?
2. The Logos article maintains that all are guilty of "drinking of the wine" of Babylon, as everyone stands condemned of idol worship. Do you agree?

This article also suggests that the judgments of God, as proclaimed in the third angel's message, may be seen as having already fallen in a very real way—as seen in pollution, war, etc. Do you likewise conceive of the judgments of God in this way? Explain.

3. Roland Blaich quotes William Stringfellow in the Evidence article this week as saying, "The practice of religion for its own sake is *always* idolatrous." In reflection upon your personal experience, what significance does this statement have for you?
4. Dale Hepker, in the Opinion article for this week, says, "What a tragedy that men follow the gospel according to men, but not the gospel according to God." What is he implying here? Is not the Spirit of God at work in the ideas of men? And are not these human ideas prevalent in the Scriptures?
5. What can you do to make public worship more beneficial? What can you do this Sabbath?

The Second Coming



"In just a very little while,
'He who is coming will come and
will not delay.
But my righteous one will live by faith.
And if he shrinks back,
I will not be pleased with him.'
But we are not of those who shrink
back and are destroyed, but of those
who believe and are saved."

— Hebrews 10:37-39; NIV

by Susan Oakes

Late one Friday afternoon I was hurrying toward the local supermarket to pick up one last item for the next day's potluck. I scarcely noticed the two children sitting patiently on the curb talking to each other as I traveled down the sidewalk.

Inside the store, I clutched my purchase and waited impatiently in the checkout line, mumbling to myself about the young woman in front of me whose loaded shopping cart would take so much time to tally. Finally I followed her out the door and saw the waiting children, their faces expectant as they came to meet her. The woman handed her older son one of the grocery bags and reassuringly took the younger one's hand as they started towards their car.

As I followed I overheard the older boy confidently tell his brother, "I told you she'd come soon!"

Later, reflecting on the boy's faith in a soon coming, I began to re-think my own expectations of another soon coming. Could it be that we have expected Christ's second coming to

be "soon" for so long that by now we have lost interest in it?

For some of us, the doctrine of the second coming of Christ has been part of our education since that first Sabbath in Cradle Roll. For those without the early teaching, the net effect of all the repetition might still be the same—a gradual desensitivity to the reality of Christ's soon return.

The doctrine of the second coming of Christ is more than a theological statement to be argued and proof-texted. It is more than that which inspired the second half of our denominational name. It is more than reward or punishment to reinforce good behavior.

It is that event to which all creation is being drawn—an actual, literal event—the culmination of God's eternal purpose through Jesus Christ.

Indeed, "When everything is ready, then I will come and get you, so that you can always be with Me where I am" (John 14:2-3; *Living Bible*).

by editors

Notes

Many recognize the importance of studying the Bible in light of history. The culture, tradition and geography of Bible times lend much to the understanding of biblical characters and situations. There is one biblical event, however, yet to be realized

“In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Daniel 2:44). The second coming of Christ is a natural event, a logical culmination of world history. Given the facts of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, creation, the incarnation, Calvary, the resurrection and ascension—the second coming is called for; one of history’s great essentials; a part of creation’s total pattern. Without it, there is tragedy. With it, there is the greatest of triumphs, for **“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32, 33).**

In implementing God’s bold program for planet earth, the divine wrapped Himself with humanity. The infinite adopted the nature of the finite, the eternal tied Himself to time. This was necessary in order to overthrow the enemy, re-establish God’s rule over the whole earth and promise a time when the **“Meek . . . shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).** The meek, though seemingly the last to inherit anything, can have a new attitude toward the future, as can all followers of Christ, for the Lord has in the incarnation united humanity’s weakness with His strength.

Thus, Christ can promise **“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).** Ellen White comments: *“The object of Christ’s departure was the opposite of what the disciples feared. It did not mean a final separation. . . . While He was building mansions for them, they were to build characters after the divine similitude.”*¹

The disciples, however, did not understand much of what Jesus had said concerning His return. Thus, **“as he sat upon the mount of Olives,” they “came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3).** Revealing history before it came to be, Jesus outlined events from His death to his second coming. In one instance, He drew a comparison from the Old Testament: **“As it was in the days of Noe”** He said, **“so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage” (Luke 17:26, 27).** These verses have applied to most generations throughout history, and they are especially applicable to that generation alive immediately preceding the second coming. But they also come as a stinging indictment against those who have “a form of godliness,” that is to professing Christians, to church members, and certainly to ourselves.

D.R.S./E.B.S.

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 663.

by Jon Pritchard

Although the second coming of Christ seems long delayed, today's church is not to be discouraged. The apostles and early Advent believers experienced numerous frustrations and disappointments, and yet left many words of encouragement to those who earnestly await the Savior's return.

Commenting on the 1844 disappointment, Ellen White wrote: "The earnest, sincere believers had given up all for Christ, and had shared His presence as never before. They had, as they believed, given their last warning to the world; and expecting soon to be received into the society of their divine Master and the heavenly angels, they had, to a great extent, withdrawn from the society of those who did not receive the message. With intense desire they had prayed, 'Come Lord Jesus, and come quickly.' But He had not come. And now to take up again the heavy burden of life's cares and perplexities, and to endure the taunts and sneers of a scoffing world, was a terrible trial of faith and patience."¹

"God did not forsake His people; His Spirit still abode with those who did not rashly deny the light which they had received, and denounce the Advent Movement. In the Epistle to the Hebrews are words of encouragement and warning for the tried, waiting ones at this crisis: 'Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.'

"That this admonition is addressed to the church in the last days is evident from the words pointing to the nearness of the Lord's coming: 'For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' And it is plainly implied that there would be a seeming delay, and that the Lord would appear to tarry. The instruction here given is especially adapted to the experience of Adventists at this time. The people here addressed were in danger of making shipwreck of faith."²

Like those before us, we face a similar delay. However, we have been supplied with reasons for it that should make our trial easier.

"The very delay, so painful to them [God's people], is the best answer to their petitions. As they endeavour to wait trustingly for the Lord to work, they are led to exercise faith, hope, and patience, which have been too little exercised during their religious experience."³

"The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger, —a faith that will not faint, though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded."⁴

Key passage:
 Hebrews 10:35-39

Notes

"With intense desire they had prayed, 'Come Lord Jesus . . .' but He had not come"

"The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure . . ."

¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 404.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 407-408.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 631.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 621.

by Thomas Merton

Key passage:
 Luke 2:1-14

Notes

When the perfect and ultimate message, the joy which is *The Great Joy*, explodes silently upon the world, there is no longer any room for sadness. Therefore no circumstance in the Christmas Gospel, however trivial it may seem, is to be left out of The Great Joy. In the special and heavenly light which shines around the coming of the Word into the world, all ordinary things are transfigured. In the mystery of Peace which is proclaimed to a world that cannot believe in peace, a world of suspicion, hatred and distrust, even the rejection of the Prince of Peace takes on something of the color and atmosphere of peace.

So there was no room at the inn? True! But that is simply mentioned in passing, in a matter of fact sort of way, as the Evangelist points to what he really means us to see—the picture of pure peace, pure joy: “She wrapped her first born Son in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger” (Luke 2:7). By now we know it well, and yet we all might still be questioning it—except that a reason was given for an act that might otherwise have seemed strange: “There was no room for them at the inn.” Well, then, they obviously found some other place!

But when we read the Gospels and come to know them thoroughly, we realize there are other reasons why it was necessary that there be no room at the inn, and why there had to be some other place. In fact, the inn was the last place in the world for the birth of the Lord.

The Evangelist, preparing us for the announcement of the birth of the Lord, reminds us that the fullness of time has come. Now is the time of final decision, the time of mercy, the “acceptable time,” the time of settlement, the time of the end. It is the time of repentance, the time for the fulfillment of all promises, for the Promised One has come. But with the coming of the end, a great bustle and business begins to shake the nations of the world. The time of the end is the time of massed armies, “wars and rumors of wars,” of huge crowds moving this way and that, of “men withering away for fear,” of flaming cities and sinking fleets, of smoking lands laid waste, of technicians planning grandiose acts of destruction. The time of the end is the time of the Crowd: and the eschatological message is spoken in a world where, precisely because of the vast indefinite roar of armies on the move and the restlessness of turbulent mobs, the message can be heard only with difficulty. . . .

Why then was the inn crowded? Because of the census, the eschatological massing of the “*whole world*” in centers of registration, to be numbered, to be identified with the structure of imperial power. . . .

It was therefore impossible that the Word should lose Himself by being born into shapeless and passive mass. He had indeed emptied Himself, taken the form of God’s servant, man. But He did not empty Himself to the point of becoming mass man, faceless man. It was therefore right that there should be no room for Him in a crowd that had been called together as an eschatological sign. His being born outside that crowd is even more of a sign. That there is no room for Him is a sign of the end.

Nor are the tidings of great joy announced in the crowded inn. In the massed crowd there are always new tidings of joy and disaster. Where each new announcement is the greatest of announcements, where every day’s disaster is beyond compare, every day’s danger demands the ultimate sacrifice, all news and all judgment is reduced to zero. . . . News? There is so much news that there is no room left for the true tidings, the “Good News,” *The Great Joy*.

**“The time of
 the end is
 the time of
 the Crowd”**

**“He had
 indeed
 emptied
 Himself, . . .
 but not to
 the point of
 becoming
 mass man,
 faceless man”**

Hence The Great Joy is announced, after all, in silence, loneliness and darkness, to shepherds "living in the fields" or "living in the countryside" and apparently unmoved by the rumors or massed crowds. These are the remnant of the desert-dwellers, the nomads, the true Israel. . . .

They go and they see not a prophet, not a spirit, but the Flesh in which the glory of the Lord will be revealed and by which all men will be delivered from the power that is in the world, the power that seeks to destroy the world because the world is God's creation, the power that mimics creation, and in doing so, pillages and exhausts the resources of a bounteous God-given earth.

We live in the time of no room, which is the time of the end. The time when everyone is obsessed with lack of time, lack of space, with saving time, conquering space, projecting into time and space and anguish produced within them by the technological furies of size, volume, quantity, speed, number, price, power and acceleration.

The primordial blessing, "increase and multiply," has suddenly become a hemorrhage of terror. We are numbered in billions, and massed together, marshalled, numbered, marched here and there, taxed, drilled, armed, worked to the point of insensibility, dazed by information, drugged by entertainment, surfeited with everything, nauseated with the human race and with ourselves, nauseated with life.

As the end approaches, there is no room for nature. The cities crowd it off the face of the earth.

As the end approaches, there is no room for quiet. There is no room for solitude. There is no room for thought. There is no room for attention, for the awareness of our state.

In the time of the ultimate end, there is no room for man.

Those that lament the fact that there is no room for God must also be called to account for this. Have they perhaps added to the general crush by preaching a solid marble God that makes man alien to himself, a God that settles Himself grimly like an implacable object in the inner heart of man and drives man out of himself in despair?

The time of the end is the time of demons who occupy the heart (pretending to be gods) so that man himself finds no room for himself in himself. He finds no space to rest in his own heart, not because it is full, but because it is void. Yet if he knew that the void itself, when hovered over by the Spirit, is an abyss of creativity. . . . He cannot believe it. There is no room for belief.

There is no room for him in the massed crowds of the eschatological society, the society of the end, in which all those for whom there is no room are thrown together, thrust, pitched out bodily into a whirlpool of empty forms, human specters, swirling aimlessly through their cities, *all wishing they did not exist.*

In the time of the end there is no longer room for the desire to go on living. The time of the end is the time when men call upon the mountains to fall upon them, because they wish they did not exist.

Why? Because they are part of a proliferation of life that is not fully alive, it is programmed for death. . . . It is haunted by the demon of emptiness. And out of this unutterable void come the armies, the missiles, the weapons, the bombs, the concentration camps, the race riots, the racist murders, and all the other crimes of mass society. . . .

Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for Him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because He cannot be at home in it, because He is out of place in it, and yet He must be in it, His place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is

"As the end approaches, there is no room for nature . . . no room for quiet . . . no room for man"

"Those that lament the fact that there is no room for God must . . . be called to account for this"

"Into this world, this demented inn . . . Christ has come uninvited"

with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world. He is mysteriously present in those for whom there seems to be nothing but the world at its worst. For them, there is no escape even in imagination. They cannot identify with the power structure of a crowded humanity which seeks to project itself outward, anywhere, in a centrifugal flight in the void, to get out *there* where there is no God, no man, no name, no identity, no weight, no self, nothing but the bright, self-directed, perfectly obedient and infinitely expensive machine.

For those who are stubborn enough, devoted enough to power, there remains this last apocalyptic myth of machinery propagating its own kind in the eschatological wilderness of space—while on earth the bombs make room! . . .

The time of the end? All right: when?

That is not the question.

To say it is the time of the end is to answer all the questions, for if it is the time of the end, and of great tribulation, then it is certainly and above all the time of The Great Joy. It is the time to "lift up your heads for your redemption is at hand." It is the time when the promise will be manifestly fulfilled, and no longer kept secret from anyone. It is the time for the joy that is given not as the world gives, and that no man can take away.

For the true eschatological banquet is not that of the birds on the bodies of the slain. It is the feast of the living, the wedding banquet of the Lamb. The true eschatological convocation is not the crowding of armies on the field of battle, but the summons of The Great Joy, the cry of deliverance: "Come out of her my people that you may not share in her sins and suffer from her plagues!" (Revelation 18:4). The cry of the time of the end was uttered also in the beginning by Lot in Sodom, to his sons-in-law: "Come, get out of this city, for the Lord will destroy it. But he seemed to them to be jesting" (Genesis 19:14).

To leave the city of death and imprisonment is surely not bad news except to those who have so identified themselves with their captivity that they can conceive no other reality and no other condition. In such a case, there is nothing but tribulation: for while to stay in captivity is tragic, to break away from it is unthinkable—and so more tragic still. . . .

What is needed then is the grace and courage to see that "The Great Tribulation" and "The Great Joy" are really inseparable, and that the "Tribulation" becomes "Joy" when it is seen as the Victory of Life over Death. . . .

For eschatology is not *finis* and punishment, the winding up of accounts and the closing of books: it is the final beginning, the definitive birth into a new creation. It is not the last gasp of exhausted possibilities but the first taste of all that is beyond conceiving as actual.

But can we believe it? ("He seemed to them to be jesting!")

"The time of the end . . . is the time of The Great Joy"

"Eschatology is . . . the first taste of all that is beyond conceiving as actual"

Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable*. Copyright © 1965 by the Abbey of Gethsemani, Inc. Reprinted by permission of New Directions.

Thomas Merton has best been described as a contemplative, spiritual writer, poet, peacemaker, man among men, servant of God.

by Diane Forsyth

Key passage:
II Corinthians 4:18

Notes

In the morning we would be going to the beach. I stared into my darkened bedroom much too excited to sleep. My head was a joyful jumble of thoughts about the weatherworn cabin by the sea, the "Green Onion," where our family would have such great fun with the Wagners. I could hardly contain my eagerness as I listened to Mother packing and preparing in the next room. I waited.

Waiting. How does one do it the right way? When I grew up and could help bake the beans and pack the suitcases, and shove and stuff things into the car for the eight-hour drive to the beach, waiting was something more than just wishing morning would come.

But I didn't have to grow up to have waiting be something less than happy anticipation. There were times when waiting was a "certain fearful looking for of judgment" (Hebrews 10:27). When I was sent to my room for pre-spanking meditation, there were no visions of sugar plums, or "green onions," to brighten the gloom.

But whatever the right way to wait is, I'm sure that knowing how to *want* is as important as knowing how to *wait*.

Do you want an end to tears? No more suffering? No more injustice? No more fear? Do you want families reunited? Loved ones forever enjoying each other? Friends never parting? Time to revel in love and beauty? No weariness? Who would say they didn't want the Lord to come when asked in those terms?

Yet, there are a lot of Christians, second-coming-believing Christians, who are not lying awake with excitement wishing the Lord would hurry and come.

Some want to get married first, become a physician, or travel to the Holy Land. Others experience the pull of the familiar ("Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home"). This old earth is *home*. And trading old homes for new ones isn't easy. Some of us learned this several years ago when we traded our old church for a new one. While we dreamed of and built the new church, we complained about the old, inadequate facility. Finally, the time came for the great celebration. As we entered the narthex of our new church, we expected a certain euphoria. I thought, "Isn't this great? A beautiful dream come true! Yet, I'm not really comfortable here."

We know we won't be disappointed in the narthex of the New Jerusalem. But we've also known since babyhood and our first soft, worn blanket, how comfortable the old, familiar things can be.

So what is the right way to want the Lord to come? Here are some suggestions:

1. We should affirm our earthly hopes. The right way to want the Lord to come does not involve pretending we're not interested in marriage, careers or adventure. It's not by thinking that the old, familiar things do not matter to us. We don't learn to want the Lord to come by denying realities.

2. We should make our earthly hopes worthy of heaven. The secret of wanting the Lord to come has to do with making these very present realities measure up to those greater realities. There's a whole lot here that legitimately deserves our interest and affection!

3. We must realize that God's future is greater yet. "We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:18, R.S.V.).

by John Brunt

Ideas have practical consequences in actual life, and theological ideas are no exception. Our ideas about the second coming do not function merely to satisfy our curiosity about the future; they have profound consequences in our daily lives. Our ideas about the "last things" can motivate a life of hope and confidence, or they can lead to guilt, discouragement and despair.

Take, for example, the idea of the delay of the second coming of Jesus. In recent years much Adventist literature has emphasized our responsibility for this delay by juxtaposing statements from Ellen White which suggest that we can hasten or delay the second coming, and that when Christ's character is perfectly reproduced in us Jesus will come. Among these statements are the following:

"It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain."¹

"When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."²

The practical consequences of these ideas in individual lives and in the church depend completely on the *context* in which they are viewed. When seen within the context of Paul's radical doctrine of grace, which affirms that the *only* basis for salvation is God's grace as revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, these ideas point to the patience of a gracious God who is not willing that any should perish. They remind us that God would rather wait for His people than say, "Ready or not, here I come," and destroy them. The metaphor of the waiting God is yet another picture of His long-suffering intention to save rather than destroy.

One of the greatest problems in Adventist eschatology has been the tendency to think about the end in isolation from the doctrine of salvation. Unfortunately, when divorced from the doctrine of grace and its constant reminder that none of our works—past, present or future—can serve to save us or increase God's love for us, our eschatological ideas have a demonic effect.

I wish I had five dollars for every time I heard end-time schemes used to produce guilt and despair. I have listened to sermons where I have been told that if I would only get good enough Jesus would come. I have sat in ministerial meetings and been told that if I would only have spent less time preparing sermons and more time knocking on doors Jesus would already have come!

Only when these ideas about the delay of the second coming are divorced from God's grace can they be used to spank and produce guilt. Only when we have forgotten that God's grace is the only basis for our salvation can we turn the beautiful picture of a long-suffering and gracious God into a paddle with which to intimidate and accuse each other.

Eschatological ideas do have definite effects on life. But the effects will be positive only if we can remember the doctrine of salvation when we talk about the doctrine of last things.

¹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

² *Ibid.*

Key passage:
II Peter 3

Notes

"One of the greatest problems in Adventist eschatology has been the tendency to think about the end in isolation from the doctrine of salvation"

REACT

1. Yes or No: Is the second coming of Christ soon?
2. When did you last think seriously about the end of time and the return of Jesus? What prompted you to think of it? How did it make you feel?
3. Have you ever felt "put off" by a dry recitation of the signs of the end? Does this make Jesus' coming seem less real? How can you tell people about the signs and the second coming without resorting to clichés?

WHAT IF . . .



"You're early!"

-
4. What is your reaction to the above cartoon? Explain.

The Kingdom Of God



“The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.”

— Luke 17:20, 21; NIV

by St. Augustine

We have already stated in the preceding books that God, who desires not only that the human race might be able, by the similarity of nature, to associate with one another, but also that they might be bound together in harmony and peace by the ties of the relationship, was pleased to derive all men from one individual and created man with such a nature that the members of this race would not have died, had not the first two, of whom the one was created out of nothing, and the other out of him, merited death by their disobedience; for by them so great a sin was committed that by it the human nature was altered for the worse and was transmitted also to their posterity liable to sin and subject to death. And the kingdom of death so reigned over men that the deserved penalty of sin would have hurled all headlong even unto the second death, of which there is no end, had not the undeserved grace of God saved some from this destiny. And thus it has come to pass, that though there are many and great nations all over the earth whose rites and customs, speech, arms, and dress are distinguished by marked differences, yet there are no more than two human societies which we may justly call two cities according to the language of our Scriptures. The one city consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, the other of those who wish to live after the spirit; and when they severally achieve what they wish, they live in peace, each after their kind.

The citizens of the city of God live according to the spirit, i.e., according to God; the others live according to the flesh, i.e., according to man. . . .

But when man lives according to himself—that is, according to man, not according to God—he assuredly lives according to a lie; not that man is a lie, for God, who is certainly not the author and creator of a lie, is man's author and creator, but

because man was made upright that he might not live according to himself, but according to Him that made him—in other words, that he might do God's will and not his own; and not to live as he was made to live, that is a lie. . . . Wherefore it is not without meaning said that all sin is a lie. For no sin committed save by that desire or will by which we desire that it be well with us. That, therefore, is a lie which we do in order that it may be well with us, but which makes us more miserable than we were. And why is this but because the source of man's happiness lies only in God, whom He abandons when he sins, and not in himself, by living according to whom he sins?

When we said, therefore, that two diverse and conflicting human cities have arisen because some men live according to the flesh and others according to the spirit, we might equally well have said, "because some men live according to man, others according to God. . . ."

The right will . . . is well-directed love, and the wrong will is ill-directed love. But love yearning to have what is loved, is desire; love having and enjoying what is loved, is joy; love fleeing what is opposed to it when it has befallen it, is sadness. Now all these four notions are evil if the love is evil; and they are good if the love is good.

The citizens of the holy city of God, who live according to God in the pilgrimage of this life, both fear and desire, and grieve and rejoice. And because their love is rightly placed, all these affections of theirs are right. They fear eternal punishment, they desire eternal life; they grieve because they themselves groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of their body; they rejoice in hope, because there "shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" (I Cor. 15: 54). In like manner they fear to sin,

they desire to persevere; they grieve in sin, they rejoice in good works. They fear to sin because they hear that, "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." (Matt. 24:12). They desire to persevere because they hear that it is written, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." (Matt. 10:22). . . .

In the blessed life eternal there will be love and joy, not only right, but also assured; but fear and grief there will be none. Whence it already appears in some sort what manner of persons the citizens of the city of God must be in this their pilgrimage, who live after the spirit, not after the flesh—that is to say, according to God, not according to man—and also what manner of persons they shall be in that immortality whither they are journeying. . . .

Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the

contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one who seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its god, "Thou are my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." (Ps. 3:3). In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all. The one delights in its own strength, represented in the persons of its rulers; the other says to its God, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength." (Ps. 18:1)

F. W. Strothmann, *Milestones of Thought: Saint Augustine on the Two Cities*. (© 1957 by Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., Inc., New York.) pp. 54-63. Used by permission.

by editors

Notes

"Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14, 15).

"Once having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'Thy kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17:20, 21; NIV).

The meaning of the kingdom of God—the kingdom of heaven—is paradoxical. In the Bible the kingdom of God is alluded to in two different ways, and thus two different beliefs have evolved concerning this concept. For some, the establishment of the kingdom is understood as a supernatural event, one which Christ Himself will set up when He miraculously returns. Others understand the kingdom of God in more existential terms—i.e., the kingdom of God is within us. Those who understand the symbolism of the kingdom in this way expect its manifestation on this earth in terms of ecological balance and social justice.

We Seventh-day Adventists believe in the supernatural character of the second coming of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of Heaven. Nevertheless, we also affirm that that kingdom for which we hope and pray should impinge upon the here and now. As Charles Teel has written in a previous COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY, we believe that one should let his "manner of waiting [for the establishment of the kingdom] witness to the nature of that kingdom for which" he waits.¹

Albert Schweitzer states how difficult it is to believe in the kingdom of God—he calls it a belief in "what seems impossible." He holds this doubtful attitude because he knows that "there can be no divine kingdom in the world, if there is not one first in our hearts."² Again, the Christian is challenged to act in a manner which corresponds to the character of the divine kingdom which he anticipates.

Far too often do we Adventist Christians concentrate on the how and when and manner of the supernatural establishment of the kingdom on heaven to the exclusion of working for the manifestation of the principles of that kingdom now. With heads in the clouds and our eyes in a faraway land, we oftentimes preach "Jesus saves" without helping to provide for a salvation from hunger and disease and unequal pay. But as disciples of Christ, and therefore citizens of a just and humane and balanced kingdom, we have a responsibility to demonstrate the principles of the kingdom now. Hence James could write, "**Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress. . . .**" (James 1:27; NIV).

William Barclay, the New Testament scholar, has defined the kingdom of God as the "society upon earth where God's will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven. . . ."³ While he may not identify completely with the traditional Adventist interpretation of the kingdom, he does echo the prayer of our Lord: "**Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven**" (Matthew 6:9, 10).

L.L.B/E.B.S.

¹ "Eschatology And Ethics: Matthew/Jesus" by Charles Teel, Jr., from the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY, second quarter 1981. Copyright © 1981. Page 49.

² Schweitzer, "Religion and Ethics"

³ From *The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1* (Revised Edition), translated and interpreted by William Barclay. Copyright © 1975 William Barclay. Published in the U.S.A. by The Westminster Press. Used by permission. Page 211.

by Elvonne Whitney

Key passage:
Matthew 13:44

Notes

How much would you pay for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven? You can afford it you know, even on a student's budget.

"'Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.'

"This parable illustrates the value of the heavenly treasure, and the effort that should be made to secure it. The finder of the treasure in the field was ready to part with all that he had, ready to put forth untiring labor, in order to secure the hidden riches. So the finder of heavenly treasure will count no labor too great and no sacrifice too dear, in order to gain the treasures of truth.

"A student may go through all the grades of the schools and colleges today. He may devote all his powers to acquiring knowledge. But unless he has a knowledge of God, unless he obeys the laws that govern his being, he will destroy himself. By wrong habits he loses his power of self-appreciation. He loses self-control. He cannot reason correctly about matters that concern him most closely. He is reckless and irrational in his treatment of mind and body. By wrong habits he makes of himself a wreck. Happiness he cannot have; for his neglect to cultivate pure, healthful principles places him under the control of habits that ruin his peace. His years of taxing study are lost, for he has destroyed himself. He has misused his physical and mental powers, and the temple of the body is in ruins. He is ruined for this life and for the life to come. By acquiring earthly knowledge he thought to gain a treasure, but by laying his Bible aside he sacrificed a treasure worth everything else.

"The word of God is to be our study. We are to educate our children in the truths found therein. It is an inexhaustible treasure; but men fail to find this treasure because they do not search until it is within their possession. Very many are content with a supposition in regard to truth. They are content with a surface work, taking for granted that they have all that is essential. They take the sayings of others for truth, being too indolent to put themselves to diligent, earnest labor, represented in the word as digging for hidden treasure.

"Let none think that there is no more knowledge for them to gain. The depth of human intellect may be measured; the works of human authors may be mastered; but the highest, deepest, broadest flight of the imagination cannot find out God. There is infinity beyond all that we can comprehend. We have seen only the glimmering of divine glory and of the infinitude of knowledge and wisdom; we have, as it were, been working on the surface of the mine, when rich golden ore is beneath the surface, to reward the one who will dig for it. The shaft must be sunk deeper and yet deeper in the mine, and the result will be glorious treasure. Through a correct faith, divine knowledge will become human knowledge.

"This is the knowledge which is obtained by searching the word of God. And this treasure may be found by every soul who will give all to obtain it."¹

¹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 103-114 *passim*.

"The finder of the treasure in the field was ready to part with all that he had . . ."

"Let none think that there is no more knowledge for them to gain"

by Leonardo Boff

Key passage:
Matthew 13:51, 52

Notes

**Christ is
the kingdom
already present**

The theme of Christ's preaching was neither himself nor the church but the kingdom of God. "Kingdom of God" signifies the realization of a utopia cherished in human hearts, total human and cosmic liberation. It is the new situation of an old world, now replete with God and reconciled with itself. In a word, it could be said that the kingdom of God means a total, global, structural revolution of the old order, brought about by God and only by God. Consequently, the kingdom is a kingdom of God in a subjective and objective sense. Christ understood himself not only as a preacher and prophet of this good news (gospel) but as an element of the new transformed situation. He is the new human person, the kingdom already present though veiled in weakness.

Adherence to Christ is an indispensable condition of participation in the new order to be introduced by God (Luke 12:8, 9). In order that such a liberation from sin, from its personal and cosmic consequences, and from all other alienation suffered in creation, be realized, Christ makes two fundamental demands: He demands personal conversion and postulates a restructuring of the human world.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IMPLIES A REVOLUTION IN OUR THINKING AND ACTING

In the first place the kingdom of God concerns persons. It demands their conversion. Conversion means changing one's mode of thinking and acting to suit God, and therefore undergoing an interior revolution. Because of this Jesus begins by preaching: "Be converted, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand" (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). Being converted does not consist in pious exercises, but rather in a new mode of existing before God and in the light of the tidings announced by Jesus. Conversion always implies a rupture: "Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on a household of five will be divided: three against two and two against three. . . ." (Luke 12:51, 52). Nevertheless this reversal in one's mode of thinking and acting is to be life-giving, it is to lead a person to a crisis and to deciding for the new order that is already in our midst, that is Jesus Christ himself (Luke 17:21).

Jesus is not so much interested in whether a person before all else observed all the laws, paid tithes on all things, observed all the legal prescriptions of religion and society. He is primarily interested in whether a person is disposed to sell all properties to acquire the field with hidden treasure; whether one is ready to sell all to buy the precious pearl (Matt. 13:44-46); whether, in order to enter the new order, one has the courage to abandon family and fortune (Matt. 10:37), risk one's life (Luke 17:33), tear out an eye and cut off a hand (Mark 9:43 and Matt. 5:29). This *no* to the established order does not signify asceticism but an attitude of readiness to comply with the exigencies of Jesus. . . .

And all this begins to emerge from the moment one becomes as a child (Matt. 18:3). The phrase "unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3; cf. Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17) does not seek to exalt the natural innocence of children. Christ is not a sentimental romantic. The point of comparison is elsewhere: Just as a child depends completely on the help of its parents and can do nothing on its own, so it is with the human person in the face of the demands of the kingdom. . . .

**"Conversion
always implies
a rupture"**

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IMPLIES A REVOLUTION OF THE HUMAN WORLD

The preaching of Jesus about the kingdom of God concerns not only persons, demanding conversion of them. It also affects the world of persons in terms of liberation from legalism, from conventions without foundations, from authoritarianism and the forces and powers that subject people. Let us see how Christ reacted when confronted with the mentors of the established order of his day. Concretely, for the simple people the mentors of the religious and social order were not so much the Romans in Caesarea by the sea or in Jerusalem, nor the high priest in the temple, nor the immediate governors set up by the Roman occupation forces such as Herod, Philip, Archelaus, or Pontius Pilate.

Those who distributed justice, resolved cases, and catered to the public order were the scribes and Pharisees in particular. The scribes were rabbis, theologians who carefully studied the Scriptures and Mosaic law, principally the religious traditions of the people. The Pharisees constituted a congregation of especially fervent and pious laity. They observed the letter of the law and made sure that the people too observed all strictly. They were spread throughout all Israel, ruled in the synagogues, possessed enormous influence over the people, and for each case they had a solution drawn from the religious traditions of the past and the commentaries on the Mosaic law (*halacha*). They did all this in function of the established order. . . .

Though "perfect," they nevertheless possessed a basic defect denounced by Jesus: "You have neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, good faith!" (Matt. 23:23). . . . To enter the kingdom it is not sufficient to do what the law ordains. The present order of things cannot save people from their fundamental alienation. It is order in the midst of disorder. A change of life is required, a complete turnabout of the old situation.

It is because of this that the marginalized of the present order are nearer the kingdom of God than all the others. To these, Jesus feels himself especially called (Matt. 9:13). He breaks the social conventions of the period. We know how class distinctions were strictly observed between rich and poor, neighbors and strangers, priests of the temple and Levites of the small villas, Pharisees, Sadducees, and tax officials. Those who practiced despised professions were avoided and condemned: for example, shepherds, doctors, tailors, barbers, butchers, and principally the publicans (tax collectors) who were considered Roman collaborators.

How does Jesus react when confronted with this social stratification? He disdains it. He does not comply with religious conventions such as washing one's hands before eating and before entering a house. He does not respect the division of classes. He speaks with all. He seeks contact with the marginalized, the poor, and the despised. To those who are scandalized he cries out: "I did not come to call the just but sinners. The healthy do not need a doctor" (Matt. 11:19). He converses with a prostitute and welcomes Gentiles (Mark 7:24-30); he eats with a great thief, Zaccheus, and accepts in his company a greedy man who later betrayed him, Judas Iscariot; three ex-guerrillas become his disciples; and he allows women to accompany him on trips, something unheard of for a rabbi of his time. The pietistic ones comment: "look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 11:19). . . .

**Jesus
disdained
the social
stratification**

Do not concern yourself with social conventions: "Many who are first will be last and the last first" (Mark 10:31) and "tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21:31). Why? Because of their marginalized situation within the socio-religious Jewish system, they are quicker to listen to and follow the message of Jesus. They have nothing to lose because they have nothing and are nothing socially. They have only to wait. This is not so for the Pharisees. They are structured into the system that they created for themselves. They are rich, well known, have religion, and are confident that God is at their side. Sad illusion. The parable of the proud Pharisee who fulfilled the law and the humble repentant publican teaches us something quite different (Luke 18-9-14). The Pharisees do not wish to listen to Jesus because his message is disquieting, obliging them to de-establish themselves; it demands a conversion away from the safe and solid ground of the law and to the norm of a universal love that is superior to all laws (Matt. 5:43-48).

It is not surprising that the Pharisees murmur (Luke 15:2) and make a mockery of Jesus (Luke 16:14), . . . and even kill him (Mark 3:6; John 5:18; 8:59; 10:31). . . . But Jesus is not intimidated. He goes on preaching individual and social conversion because the ultimate end is nigh: "The time has come and the new order to be introduced by God is close at hand" (Mark 1:15; Matt. 4:17).

CONCLUSION: THE THEOLOGICAL RELEVANCE OF THE ATTITUDES OF . . . JESUS

The figure of Jesus that emerges from these incisive *logia* and brief stories is of a man free from preconceived ideas, whose eyes are open to essentials, who gives himself to others, especially those that are abandoned physically and morally. By doing this he shows us that the established order cannot redeem fundamental human alienation. This world, as it is, cannot be the location of the kingdom of God. (cf. I Cor. 15:50). It must suffer a restructuring of its very foundations. It is love that saves, the disinterested acceptance of others and the complete opening of self to God. There are no more friends or enemies, neighbors or strangers. There are only brothers and sisters. . . .

According to this new vision, the Christian does not belong to any family, but to the family of the whole world. All peoples are the Christians' brothers and sisters. As the author of the letter to Diognetus (c.A.D.190) said: "They obey the established laws, but their life surpasses the perfection of law. . . . All foreign lands are a fatherland to them and all fatherlands a foreign land." They are in this world, work in it, help in its construction and also in its direction. Nevertheless, they do not place their ultimate hopes in it. People who have dreamt of a kingdom of heaven as Jesus did, are no longer content with this world as they find it. Confronted with this world they feel themselves full of ambiguities, like a "parishioner," in the strong primitive sense that this word had for St. Clement of Rome (d. 97) or for St. Ireneus (d. 202). That is, they feel themselves strangers en route to a more human and happier fatherland. For a little while they must live here, but they know that since Jesus appeared we can dream of a new heaven and a new earth.

"There are no more friends or enemies, neighbors or strangers. There are only brothers and sisters"

Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator, A Critical Christology of Our Time*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 10545. © 1968. Used by permission, pp. 63-66, 72-79.

by editors

Key passage:
Matthew 6:10

Notes

The content of Christ's Sermon on the Mount is seen by some as being composed of unreal, impractical demands. The "blueprint" of the kingdom of heaven forbids Christians from seeking retaliation, *not loving* any person or group of persons formerly regarded as an enemy, judging others, ignoring the oppressed and the systems that create oppression, etc., etc. The challenge of the kingdom is so exhaustive and demanding that it has caused one prominent theologian to write an article entitled "Why I Am Not a Christian"—expressing a conclusion he reached that the requirements of the kingdom are not practical.

But for those of us who, after grasping the goals of the kingdom of God, still choose to be Christians, these high ideals—though demanding—are seen as significant, relevant and a powerful force for the good of our *present age*. Consider, for example, three important teachings of this "gospel of the kingdom."

1. To believe in the kingdom of God means to be concerned about that which God has created. "This world *is* our home"—to appropriately edit the old tune. Yes, our destiny is to be with God, but God is He who has established and affirmed *this world*—and He calls those who anticipate being with Him to do likewise.

Too often, the Christian's concept of the kingdom of heaven has given him license to community irresponsibility. The thinking runs something like this: "Who cares what happens to this doomed world—the Lord is soon going to destroy it and most of its inhabitants anyway!"

But to believe in the kingdom of heaven is to believe in a God incarnate—to believe in a God who is very much concerned with *this world*.

2. To believe in the kingdom of heaven also means to seek to do the least amount of violence possible. The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead has perceptively stated, "Life is robbery." By this he means that one cannot exist without doing violence at least to lower forms of existence. To be human is to do violence at least to the vegetable, if not also to the animal, world. Thus, a consistent nonviolent position relative to all life is not only impractical, it is also obviously suicidal!

Therefore, Christians are called to do the *least amount* of violence possible—recognizing that violence on certain levels is inevitable. This position lays a foundation for things such as vegetarianism. And to Jesus, it fundamentally meant to be a peacemaker—in every realm of society and life (Matthew 5:9; NIV).

3. Then, to be a member of the kingdom of heaven means to be tolerant of others within the Christian faith, and of other faiths. To believe in the kingdom of heaven means to believe in something that transcends what we now are—to believe in something which cannot completely be identified with any people, organization or belief system here on earth.

To believe in the *kingdom of heaven* is to believe that the full realization of ultimate truth lies only in heaven—only in God—and is but partially and imperfectly understood by us humans. Thus, we can be tolerant of beliefs and systems different from our own that appear to be faulty, recognizing that we all alike share in human finitude, and that truth will be fully disclosed only in the manifestation of the heavenly kingdom.

E.B.S.

by Glen G. Greenwalt

"This is it!" These words, incited by an apocalyptic view usually reserved for seers, were David Johnson's last. The cloud that moments before had been small and black, catapulted Johnson and his trailer off a high ridge above Coldwater Creek. His body was never found. A short distance away, the irascible Harry Truman, who had refused every margin of safety, was buried beneath a searing avalanche of debris.

Scenes like the Mt. Saint Helens eruption provide excellent script material for the evangelists who believe sinners can be scared out of their sins. The unfortunate side effect of such frightening anecdotes is that they seldom make the coming of the kingdom an eagerly anticipated event. Most people find it difficult to be frightened and overjoyed at the same time. But when Jesus said, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand," people became ecstatic at the prospect. Why the difference?

I propose that although the Jews of Christ's day failed to apprehend the spiritual prerequisites of the kingdom, they were correct that the Messiah was to establish a material kingdom.

The idea of a cataclysmic end to history is foreign to most of the Old Testament. Israel's hope was rooted in a God who came to her, a nation of weak and dispirited slaves, and delivered her from the hands of her oppressors (Exodus 19:4, 5; Deut. 32). Thus the experience and the expression of Israel's faith cannot be unraveled from the fabric of history. Israel's belief in the God of history allowed for no escape from the earth; either in an unbodily way (as in the belief of many of her contemporaries) or in a physical translation (as taught in the New Testament). God was Lord of history, therefore history would be directed towards His final purposes—God would create for Israel a land reminiscent of Eden.

The New Testament picture of the end about which you may have been taught may be getting in the way of understanding this. The Old Testament Pentateuch and Writings do *not* teach that God's people are to be rescued from the earth shortly before its fiery end. No, the kingdom was to be created upon earth as God acted in history on Israel's behalf. Eventually all people would either become God's people (II Kings 8:60; Zech. 8:20ff), or they would be destroyed as they attempted to confound God's will (Joel 3:11). Then the earth would be restored to the Edenic state, or better still for former slaves, a land where they could build houses and live in them (Amos 9:13ff).

This promise of restoration was predicated upon God's undeserved kindness. Israel could not repay God. Any attempt to reduce His kindness to a matter of bookkeeping would annul the relationship. (Isaiah 1:14-47). This does not mean that the promise was established without contingencies. Israel was to perform deeds out of love and kindness just as a child desires to reciprocate the love received from his parents (Hosea 11:1-4). But if Israel broke the relationship, they would be guilty of infidelity, for it would be the betrayal of love. Thus God's relation to Israel acted as a paradigm: if Israel would make an affirmative response to God's unmerited initiative, then the promised land 'the kingdom' would be established. If, however, Israel turned from God, the source of security and blessings, then she would perish (Deut. 30:15-20).

The promise of the Edenic land never materialized. Thus arose the question in the exile and the post-exilic period of whether God had forsaken His covenant. It appeared that to believe in God's promises resulted only in disappointment and destruction (Hab. 1:13). The

Key passage:
Hebrews 3:7-4:11

Notes

"The Old Testament Pentateuch and writings do not teach that God's people are to be rescued from the earth shortly before its fiery end"

prophets' responses to this crisis were not what one might expect. They emphasized that the realization of doom was proof positive of the power of God to fulfill the oracles of deliverance (Zech. 8:14, 15). Since the covenant curses were fulfilled, so would the blessings be fulfilled. Thus, as Michael Fishbane writes, "Failed expectations were not abandoned but rather reinterpreted."¹

Jeremiah thus predicted that in 70 years (10 Sabbatical cycles) the fates of Israel and Babylon would be reversed. This deliverance would so eclipse the exodus from Egypt that the former would no longer be remembered (Jer. 16:14, 15). When Daniel became aware that even this promise of restoration might be delayed, he readily confessed the justice of the indictment against Israel, while maintaining that God might again act with undeserved kindness in their behalf (Daniel 9:13-16). Daniel was told that God would provide another period of grace to Israel, 490 years (70 Sabbatical cycles). At the end of this period the Messiah would come and confirm the covenant with Israel. What is interesting in Jeremiah's and Daniel's prophecies is the reapplication of the Sabbatical rest to the situation of Israel's captivity. In Deuteronomy the Sabbath was a symbol of Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 5:15). It became the Magna Carta of all acts of deliverance. Every Sabbath day servants were released from labor (Exodus 20:11). On the year of Jubilee (the consummation of seven Sabbatical cycles, Lev. 25) slaves were freed, the land returned to its original owners, and debts were forgiven. Now Daniel prophesies that at the end of 490 years (10 Sabbatical cycles) the final deliverance would come (cf. Luke 4:16).

Amazingly, the Messiah would be killed, but the period of grace would continue for another three-and-a-half years. If Israel repented, then the eternal kingdom would be established (Daniel 9:24, 27).

The book of Zechariah fills in the historical details that Daniel hints at. The Messiah would come as a servant-lord to establish His covenant in Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9), only to be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12) and put to death (Zech. 12:10). Faced with the grizzly spectacle of the dead Messiah, Israel would repent (Zech. 12:10) and God would then effect the final deliverance of His people (Zech. 14:1). Those who were yet opposed to His will would be cut off (Zech. 14:2, 3) or suffer a terrible plague (Zech. 14:18). On that day the curse would be forever removed from Israel (Zech. 14:11). The long-awaited day of the Lord would be established as a continuous day (Zech. 14:7).

Obviously, the end of Zechariah's prophecy was not fulfilled. The Messiah came at the beginning of the last Sabbatical cycle of Daniel's prophecy. He was killed in the midst of the week. But Israel never repented during the period of grace allotted her. Faced with this dilemma the New Testament writers, like their Old Testament counterparts, reaffirmed that the covenant had not been nullified. Under Joshua's leadership, Israel had failed to enter the land of rest because of unbelief. But whereas Joshua of old had failed, Jesus the new Joshua opened the way into the new land. "Therefore there yet remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).

"Daniel was told that God would provide another period of grace to Israel"

¹ Michael Fishbane, *Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis*, Scholar's Press, Chico, CA, Vol. 94, No. 3, p. 357.

1. The Logos article for this week's lesson states: "too often do we Adventist Christians concentrate on the how and when and manner of the supernatural establishment of the kingdom of heaven to the exclusion of working for the manifestation of the principles of that kingdom now. With heads in the clouds and our eyes in a faraway land, we oftentimes preach 'Jesus saves' without helping to provide for a salvation from hunger and disease and unequal pay."

Was the author correct in making this statement? Does this situation need to be remedied? Explain.

2. Leonardo Boff, in this week's Evidence article, writes: "It is love that saves, the disinterested acceptance of others and the complete opening of self to God. There are no more friends or enemies, neighbors or strangers. There are only brothers and sisters."

What are the implications of such thinking upon: the arms race; the United States' relationship to third world countries; the United States government's treatment of the American Indian; school busing; welfare programs; etc.?

3. Regarding Glen Greenwalt's "Prophecy and the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament":

What implications does this study have for understanding how prophecy operates?

What implications does this study have for explaining the delay of Christ's return?

What implications does this study have for designing models of evangelism and ministry?

4. The How To article for this week states: "To believe in the kingdom of heaven means to believe in something that transcends what we now are—to believe in something which cannot be completely identified with any people, organization or belief system here on earth."

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Defend your rationale.

A New Earth



“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

— Isaiah 65:17

by Lucile Knapp

"Wrong again," I can hear Jesus telling us. The Sadducees had been wrong about heaven, to be sure. And if it's any consolation, the disciples also had the wrong idea of heaven as their repeated jostling for favored positions showed.

Dazzled by the Revelator's descriptions, we have come to think of heaven in terms of swirling golden incandescence, shot through with pulsating flashes of radiant splendor and dazzling beauty. But maybe we, too, have been wrong.

Of course, this physical description of heaven is quite true. We will see golden streets, jewelled foundations and massive gates formed of single luminous pearls, for John tells us so. But we have been wrong in thinking that these things comprise the glory of heaven. Gold is the stuff of which streets are made there, as concrete and asphalt are here. And enormous precious stones will serve utilitarian functions as foundations and doors in heaven.

Indeed, it is obvious that our earthly system of priorities has led us to place unwarranted importance on "things." Too often we have loved things and used people. But in heaven this will be reversed. There,

we will love people and use things. Even the animals, Isaiah promises, will not consume one another for their own benefit, but will lie down together in perfect harmony. The dispossessed will finally be possessors as each lives in his own house and eats the fruit of his own vineyard, no longer threatened by human greed.

John pictures the kings of the earth as bringing the glory and honor of the nations into the city. Certainly this can't be their crown jewels! Such wealth would be totally irrelevant in the midst of such opulence. The real wealth of heaven will not consist of its golden streets and jewelled foundations, but in the preciousness of those from every nation who were bought at such a terrible price. There the individuality of each person, no longer stifled by the need to conform and imitate, will blossom into full uniqueness and personhood. And each will have learned (as did the disciples eventually) that the spirit of service—the disposition to give—is the polish that makes people shine. This is the true glory of heaven.

by editors

Notes

Because God determined before the beginning of time to bind Himself irrevocably with humanity, our destiny is "with God." This John the Revelator apprehended in vision: **"I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3).** The words, **"the tabernacle of God is with men,"** confirm God's plans for our future.

The doctrine of the second coming that we studied last week brings good news to mankind, but its realization at a given time is not the end of the story. Happily, there are further pages of revelation still to be turned: **"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isaiah 65:17).** And John adds, **"I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1).**

Although postponed by the havoc wreaked on our world, the city that Abraham longed for **"which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10),** will, when God decides, make a bold appearance. For, **"thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:18; italics supplied).** Because God alone is God, He has determined the destiny of mankind—He has established that the purpose for which He created this planet will be realized.

And what of those people who seek to be a part of this purpose? To these come the promise, **"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7).** Those who are destined to be with God have, only by the mercy and influence of the Lord Jesus Christ, overcome the powers of this world. They are those who, because of the forgiving and empowering grace of God, do **"not walk in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers."** Their **"delight is in the law of the Lord";** they are **"like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither."** They are those who have turned **"from evil" to "do good";** who have sought peace and pursued it. Those who inherit the new earth have stopped doing wrong and learned to do right. They have sought justice, encouraged the oppressed, defended the cause of the fatherless and plead the case of the widow (see Psalm 1:1-3; 34:14; Isaiah 1:16, 17; NIV).

Or, in the words of Jesus, those who abide in the new earth have been **"born again" (John 3:3).**

D.R.S./E.B.S.

by Steve McHan

Key passage:
Matthew 25:34

Notes

Today, special effects and a little imagination can take us back into the past, forward into the future, and even into other worlds. For many, these trips are woven into the fabric of everyday life, forming a pseudo-reality. They are part of the mind, but not of the experience.

For example, ask a friend about heaven and he might well answer, "Yes, I saw it the other night on 'Home Box Office.' Some casting! And the special effects!" But I know of one for whom heaven and the new earth were much more than a Hollywood production. She could testify, "I saw," and "the Lord showed me." These are her words:

"We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought the crowns, and with His own right hand placed them on our heads. . . . Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the city. . . . We all marched in and felt that we had a perfect right in the city. Here we saw the tree of life and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on either side of the river was the tree of life."¹

Later in the vision the city descends to the new earth with God and the saints. The vivid description continues. "Then we began to look at the glorious things outside of the city. There I saw most glorious houses, that had the appearance of silver, supported by four pillars set with pearls most glorious to behold. These were to be inhabited by the saints. In each was a golden shelf. I saw many of the saints go into the houses, take off their glittering crowns and lay them on the shelf, then go out into the field by the houses to do something with the earth; not as we have to do with the earth here; no, no. A glorious light shone all about their heads, and they were continually shouting and offering praises to God."²

"I saw another field full of all kinds of flowers, and as I plucked them, I cried out, 'They will never fade.' Next I saw a field of tall grass, most glorious to behold; it was living green and had a reflection of silver and gold, as it waved proudly to the glory of King Jesus. Then we entered a field full of all kinds of beasts—the lion, the lamb, the leopard, and the wolf, all together in perfect union. We passed through the midst of them, and they followed on peaceably after. Then we entered a wood, not like the dark woods we have here; no, no; but light, and all glorious; the branches of the trees waved to and fro, and we all cried out, 'We will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.' We passed through the woods, for we were on our way to Mount Zion."³

But in heaven we will have more to enjoy than what meets the five senses. "All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's children. With unutterable delight we shall enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings. We shall share the treasures gained through ages upon ages spent in contemplation of God's handiwork."⁴

"We are homeward bound. He who loved us so much as to die for us hath builded for us a city. The New Jerusalem is our place of rest. There will be no sadness in the city of God. No wail of sorrow, no dirge of crushed hopes and buried affections, will evermore be heard."⁵

And to those on His right hand, God will say, "Come! enjoy the kingdom I have prepared for you." I wonder what it will be like to be an eyewitness.

¹ *Early Writings*, pp. 16, 17.² *Ibid.*, p. 18.³ *Ibid.*⁴ *Education*, p. 307.⁵ *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9, p. 287.

by John B. Cobb, Jr.

Key passage:

Editor's Note: As Seventh-day Adventists we anticipate a new heaven and a new earth—with lions and lambs, and golden streets, and “no more sea.” Too often, however, this expectation of believers is translated into social and ecological irresponsibility—the rationale being that it is *too late* for this old world.

But is it too late? And is this “too late” attitude Christian?

The article we have selected below from the writings of John Cobb discusses this important issue. While Adventists generally do not share Dr. Cobb's evaluation of the apocalyptic portions of Scripture, he has a challenging message for the Christian community.

Notes

The church has [the] . . . task . . . to promote the needed spirit of personal and national sacrifice for the larger and the longer good. This has been central to Christian self-understanding throughout the centuries. The cross of Jesus Christ is the focus of our faith, and we know that we are called on to take up our own crosses. In recent years the call to sacrifice has often been muted. We have heard more about self-fulfillment and self-realization than about self-denial. But the time has come to return to this more basic theme of Christian tradition. For the sake of future generations, our generation is called upon to repent of its self-indulgent ways, to discipline itself, and to accept reductions in the standard of living to which it has grown so quickly accustomed. . . .

Activists may grow impatient with all this talk. To them it seems that new knowledge and new laws—not a new vision, or consciousness, or spirit—are all we need. If we stand on the brink of catastrophe, if decisions that will be made tomorrow will settle our fate, then is not all this talk of changes in our basic attitudes, changes that will certainly require years, irrelevant and distracting? Above all, should we not give up talking about God and concentrate instead on the tasks ahead? These are serious questions, and they should be seriously regarded. Is it, perhaps, already too late?

Certainly the projection of present trends for even two or three decades is frightening. The rate of growth of world population is likely to increase. New grains will temporarily ease the problem of food shortages, but they will heighten our dependence on a few crops. Crop failures will have increasingly disastrous results over wider areas. The percentage of the world population whose brains have been permanently damaged by lack of proteins in childhood will increase. The urgency of finding new sources of food will lead to the decimation of the most edible types of ocean fish. Under the pressure to produce food, more forests will be cut down and marginal land brought under cultivation. The permanent loss of topsoils will be accelerated. . . .

A blanket of smog will cover the planet reducing agricultural output and shortening human life. Local conditions will vary. Temporary concentrations of smog will kill thousands of people in cities, and life in some areas will depend on the use of gas masks and oxygen tanks. . . .

As habitable space declines, and as both land and sea become less productive, population *cannot* continue to expand. Unless air and water pollution and the poisoning of our bodies through food greatly shorten life expectancy, hundreds of millions of people will have to starve before a new balance is achieved between population and food supply.

This is a depressing projection, and many will regard it as unduly pessimistic. Perhaps the efforts now being made here and there to

“For the sake of future generations, our generation is called upon to repent of its self-indulgent ways”

“Should we not give up talking about God and concentrate instead on the tasks ahead?”

“Life in some areas will depend on the use of gas masks and oxygen tanks”

check population growth through birth control will spread and become more successful. Perhaps agricultural technology will prevent massive crop failures and further deterioration of the soil. . . . Perhaps men will stop using the oceans as the depository for wastes, find ways of avoiding oil spills or of cleaning them up, and cease poisoning the coastal areas with sewage and chemicals. Perhaps worldwide efforts against air pollution will be successful, and the present planetary temperature will be maintained.

But projection of past trends does not give us much assurance along these lines. Short-term gains and local interests usually win out in competition with long-term advantages and the larger good. When immediate needs are a matter of survival itself, restraint for the sake of others is hard to foresee.

It is equally possible to argue that these projections are too optimistic. They ignore the fact that the crises in food and pollution and the exhaustion of resources come at a time when mankind is in possession of ultimate weapons. Since Hiroshima and Nagasaki we have known that the human race lives under the threat of total extinction. To our atomic arsenal we have added equally lethal chemical and bacteriological weapons. Thus far the balance of terror has worked. We survived the Cuban confrontation. We have exercised restraint in Vietnam. We may survive the still more serious crisis in the Middle East.

But as world population grows and resources decline, tensions will be heightened. The present tone of international relations will seem calm and relaxed in retrospect. In addition, more and more nations will gain possession of apocalyptic weapons. Can we expect a people facing a real threat of extinction to refrain from unleashing the ultimate weapon and allow its enemies to be victorious?

How do we react to this somber picture of our situation? I shall speak for myself in the belief that others resemble me. My first reaction is refusal of serious belief. The individual facts I may not be able to dispute, but I deny to myself that the situation is really that bad. The authorities, with all the power and knowledge at their disposal, will certainly take care of it. I shall put in my two cents' worth on this issue, as on others, to salve my conscience and to bolster my self-image as a concerned citizen, but beyond that I shall conduct business as usual, assuming that the future will be much like the past, putting out of my mind the apocalyptic threat under which we live.

However, there are times when the recognition of the planet's dying breaks through my defenses. Then my reaction tends to be one of despair. If all the present trends lead toward destruction, must I not realistically accept the early end of human life as inevitable? What use is it to attempt the impossible task of altering the course of history, especially when my influence is so slight?

It is important to recognize the great similarity of these two responses of complacency and despair. Their results are almost identical. They let me off the hook. I am left free to eat, drink, and be merry—or more realistically, to enjoy my family, my friends, and my work—for there is no real problem to whose solution I am called to contribute. Either others will solve it or it is insoluble. My attention can be directed toward the immediate and manageable issues of daily living.

Realistic hope represents a third alternative to complacency and despair. The man who hopes can view the threat unflinchingly. He does not deny its seriousness either in his thoughts or in his feelings. Yet his hope is the refusal of despair. The man who hopes is the man who seeks openings, assumes responsibility, endures failure after failure, and still seeks new openings for fresh efforts. . . .

But how can there be hope? To tell ourselves to hope in order that

“Short-term gains and local interests usually win out”

“I deny to myself that the situation is really that bad”

“Must I not accept the early end of human life as inevitable?”

“Realistic hope represents a third alternative”

there be hope is, in the long run, futile. Hope rests on something other than its own usefulness. A partial answer is that hope is a matter of temperament or disposition, something to be dealt with, if at all, by psychologists. Perhaps such a temperament is closely connected with the basic trust one develops in the early months of his life when he is fortunate in his maternal care.

But there are other dimensions of hope, dimensions we can call existential, or religious, or even theological. In some measure hope is a function of what we believe, and in this global crisis, it is a function of what we believe *ultimately and comprehensively*.

The Old Testament found hope in the anticipated interventions of a transcendent God. The New Testament looked forward to the apocalyptic end of an unacceptable history. Few of us can live with these visions of reality, and their collapse in the last three centuries seems to have removed the grounds of hope for many people. In much of our youth culture, hope is focused on short-term goals, and it is easily shattered when these are not realized. The quest for kicks, or mystical meaning, or celebration of life in the present moment, are, in part, an expression of the loss of hope, a loss we older people have bequeathed to our children. Is there, nevertheless, for us also a basis of hope somehow equivalent to that of the Bible?

I cannot speak here for all men, or for all religious men, or even for all Christians. But for myself the answer is "yes." . . .

It is the belief in this Spirit, the giver of life and love, that is the basis of hope. In spite of all the destructive forces man lets loose against life on this planet, the Spirit of Life is at work in ever new and unforeseeable ways, countering and circumventing the obstacles man puts in its path. In spite of my strong tendencies to complacency and despair, I experience the Spirit in myself as calling forth the realistic hope apart from which there is no hope, and I am confident that what I find in myself is occurring in others also.

Since what makes for life and love and hope is not simply the decision of one individual or another, but a Spirit that moves us all, I do not have to suppose that my own efforts are of great consequence in order to believe them to be worthwhile. I can recognize that they may even be futile or misdirected and still persist in them as long as no clearer light is given. For I see what I do as part of something much greater, something in which each person participates to whatever extent he sensitively responds to the insights and opportunities that come his way. Belief in the Spirit is belief that I am not alone. That in working for life and love in hope, I am working *with* something much greater than myself; that there are possibilities for the future that cannot be simply projected out of the past; that even my mistakes and failures may be woven into a healing pattern of which I am not now aware.

Belief in the Spirit is no ground for complacency. There is no guarantee that men will respond to the Spirit's promptings in sufficient numbers and with sufficient sensitivity to begin the healing of the planet. But there is the possibility. The future *can* be different from the past. Therefore there is hope. Where there is life, there *is* hope.

Now we have returned full circle. We asked whether all this talk of changing attitudes, developing a new consciousness, and belief in God was worthwhile when the practical tasks at hand are so urgent. Is it not perhaps too late? But when we turned to consider whether it is in fact too late, it seemed that if we have hope it may not be too late, but if we despair, then there is indeed no hope. And when we asked how such hope can endure, we found ourselves grounding it in belief in Spirit. That Spirit, of course, is the God of whom we have been speaking. It is because of God that it may not be too late.

"I do not have to suppose that my own efforts are of great consequence in order to believe them to be worthwhile"

John B. Cobb, Jr., *Is It Too Late*, Bruce Publishing Co., New York, 1972, pp. 137-144.

by Joseph G. Galusha, Jr.

Key passage:
Revelation 21:1

Notes

Christians are often accused of waiting for a new heaven rather than making a new earth. Why? Because successful Christians are very busy people. They have church to attend, welfare activities to organize, money to gather, personal devotions to schedule—and the internal spiral of self-concern twirls around itself reaching dizzying and deceptive heights. Some do indeed sense that things aren't always quite right. But rather than become active in society to make real changes, they choose to live in rural remoteness in direct harmony with their interpretation of the "blueprint."

Some Christians who aren't satisfied with this "old" earth and wish to make it "new," however, find themselves living in unresolvable tension. Most who are hard-working, successful, moderately wealthy and who use for themselves an enormous portion of Mother Earth's resources, are usually not content to use these things for themselves alone—they must share. Often, however, they share without reducing their own consumption. Thus, by sharing, one may actually increase the burden of production and add to the exploitation of the earth. Yes, Christians desire to share, but usually only from their surplus.

Perhaps the Christian's attitude of exploitation can be traced to an overzealous application of a misunderstood command of God: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and *subdue* it, and have dominion over . . . the earth" (Genesis 1:28; emphasis supplied). Certainly the relationship between man and the earth that God intended to suggest was one of mutual support, with man as the rational one being most responsible for the protection and nurture of the earth. In mankind's selfishness, however, the command to "subdue" the earth has carried the connotations of ripping the earth wide to steal her treasures, and poisoning her air and water in exchange for monetary gain.

But God challenges His true followers to live in anticipation of a *new earth*—and to act appropriately. This means that we should:

1. Determine and rank our basic needs, important wants, desired comforts, and blatant excesses more honestly. Of course, things like enough food to sustain good health, enough visual space to encourage conscious reflection, and enough silence to calm the troubled spirit cannot be given up without impairing the ability to live and give again. So we must carefully ascertain our real needs.

2. Prepare to give of basic essentials by first giving what we really don't need. The rich young ruler had all he needed, all he wanted, all his neighbors needed, all his neighbors wanted, and much more. Yet he wouldn't give of what he didn't really need to get what really counted—and most of us are probably the same. So maybe gradual giving should be our first goal. Fanatical sacrifice usually takes little thought, and it may be an evidence of pride.

3. Work to preserve natural resources which are valuable simply in themselves. A forbidding desert, an isolated stream, shy mountain goats—none of these "just happened." They are each a result of the creative power of God. Thus, they are important. They may not contribute to the Gross National Product; no human may even be aware of their existence. But they *are* important.

4. Finally, ponder the fact of the coming divine future, but remember that it could be that our God is more than mildly interested in what we do with our "todays" before handing us a box of eternal "tomorrows."

by Beverly Beem

Have you ever tried to describe a favorite vacation spot to friends? How do you get them to see your secluded beach or mountain path or historic city with the same enthusiasm that you do? It's hard. You might find yourself referring to places your friends have already seen or painting word pictures to help them see the beauty and the real character of the place. But such efforts often conclude with a resigned, "You just have to be there."

I wonder if Jesus felt that same frustration in trying to describe heaven to His listeners. How could He describe it so they would want to go there? How could He help them understand the real character of the place which was so far outside their experience and even their imagination? But in Revelation 21 and 22, Jesus, still the master storyteller we know from His parables, describes the unknown in terms of the known. He describes our heavenly home in the familiar language of our earthly one.

Jesus presents our new home as a city, carrying with it the human associations of safety, order, community and art. The great, high walls suggest security; the open gates signify welcome to anyone who would enter. The gold and precious stones indicate the ultimate that mankind can imagine in value and beauty. The brilliance of the jasper and the transparency of the gold enhance the glory of God that shines from within. The tree of life, which man last saw guarded by angels with flaming swords, bears abundant fruit for the healing of the nations. And the river of life flows freely from the throne of God, the source of all the light and life of the city.

The Eden which man lost in Genesis is restored. The new paradise, however, is not a garden, but a city. The paradise is populated not with a solitary couple in the innocence of new creation, but with all the saints who have ever lived. The new city is a community of all races, all cultures, all times, living in perfect harmony because all are living in the light of the glory of God. Mankind cannot go back to Eden as it was. The years of human history have intervened, and the inhabitants of this new paradise are not innocent; they are overcomers. The city rests on the history of God's dealings with man, as represented by the gates of the twelve tribes and the foundation stones of the twelve apostles.

But there is one striking omission in the description of the perfect city. There is no temple. And that tells us the most important feature of this new paradise. The city does not need a temple, for there is no separation between God and His people. He walks among us as He did in Eden. And it is this, not the precious stones, that makes the city a paradise.

The description of the paradise of Eden and the paradise of the New Jerusalem frame the story of human history. The story of mankind is the story of loss and restoration—of the loss of fellowship with God and the finding of it again. It is not simply about a garden that is restored in the final chapters of Revelation. The revealed story of man is about the community of God with His people. This ending is really a new beginning.

Key passage:
Revelation 21-22

Notes

**"The new
paradise . . . is
not a garden but
city"**

1. What is your reaction to John Cobb's article, "Is It Too Late?"

Is it "too late"? Is this "too late" attitude Christian?

What do you think is the Adventist Christian's ecological responsibility?

2. In his How To article for this week, Joseph Galusha calls upon the reader to "remember that it could be that our God is more than mildly interested in what we do with our 'todays' before handing us a box of eternal 'tomorrows.'" Do you agree with this statement? What are the implications of it?

3. John the Revelator describes heaven in terms of golden streets and giant trees, pearly gates and a sea of glass. His descriptions are taken by many Christians in their most literal sense.

He also, however, describes forces of evil in terms of beasts with many heads and strange features, etc. These descriptions are understood symbolically, in that they only symbolize or "point to" the reality.

For what reasons do you interpret the descriptions of heaven literally rather than symbolically?

Is it significant whether or not one understands heavenly descriptions in literal or symbolic terms? Explain.

4. Do you understand the creation of the new earth to be an act of God alone, or is there a human element involved?

Fully Alive



“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

— I Corinthians 6:19, 20; NIV

by editors

It was before class at graduate school that I overheard the conversation and confession of a minister of the Christian community.

The minister was a classmate of mine, about fifty-five to sixty years old, taking a course in *Ethics, Violence and War*. His name is Pete, but some of his friends call him "Pinky"—a descriptive nickname reflecting his capillary-red skin coloration.

"For years, I had a whale-of-a drinking problem," I heard Pete saying. "It really hit me when pastoring a church in Virginia—I woke up one morning and it dawned on me that that day I would need at least five or so good, stout drinks just in order to make it through. And that really shook me up, for it was obvious that I was dependent on the stuff.

"I remember going to my office at the church, putting my head in my hands and just crying like a baby. I didn't know what to do. Here I was: a minister . . . and a drunk!"

There weren't tears in Pete's eyes now as he was relating this experience, but his eyes and face and whole manner were intense.

"I guess my secretary knew something was wrong and so she came in and tried to discuss it with me. I just frankly told her that I was an alcoholic—and a mixed up one at

that. We talked for a little while longer and then Margaret, that's my former secretary's name—a real jewel of a woman—called a special meeting for the leaders of my church.

"That afternoon my deacons and elders and assistants met with me and we just very frankly discussed my problem. Some wondered if I thought the hectic duties of the pastor's life brought this alcoholism on. Others tactfully asked if things were OK at home. And I just had to confess that I drank too much—and had for years—primarily because I simply enjoyed it.

"But that was seven years ago now. And today, after a long and difficult period of withdrawal, I don't touch the stuff—not because I wouldn't like to, but because it would put me right back in the same position I was in for years.

"But you know, I owe my sobriety today to my church members—especially to my local church leaders. For they didn't give up on me. And I never once felt any alienation or rejection. If it hadn't been for their encouragement and support in helping me—their pastor—overcome this problem, I might have worked myself into a situation where I would have had to leave the ministry, and I don't know where I would be today."

E. B. S.

by editors

Notes

During His first Galilean tour, Jesus demonstrated His deep concern for mankind's physical well-being by going **"about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people"** (Matthew 4:23). If one could ever question the Godhead's attitude regarding suffering and disease, the beneficent medical ministry of Jesus Christ proclaims to the world that Father, Son and Spirit are united in their efforts to eliminate such from the universe.

Centuries earlier, in speaking to the children of Israel, God also revealed His concern for humanity's physical condition when He pronounced **"I, the Lord, am your healer"** (Exodus 23:25). The concept of God as Healer or Re-Creator is more than a neat theological concept, as revealed especially in those biblical writings that command healthful living. In Leviticus distinctions are made between "clean" and "unclean" foods—the first may be eaten, the latter not (ch.11). There are regulations about infectious skin diseases, mildew, and purification of the mother after childbirth (see chs. 12-15). But the most important idea to be seen here relative to our discussion is not *what* was commanded, but *that* one of God's very real concerns is an existential concern for our physical being.

Paul also stands in this tradition: **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"** (Romans 12:1). And in I Corinthians he questions, **"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"** (6:19, 20). It is important to remember here that Paul refers to fellow individuals with the word "temple." The temple in Old Testament times was, of course, the dwelling place of God among His people. Paul's argument is that we are each that dwelling place today, and should therefore care for ourselves in the appropriate manner.

Caring for this temple, however, isn't easy. The demands are very high: **"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"** (I Cor. 10:31). But the Christian is not left to struggle alone. Paul promises that Christians **"are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit . . ."** (Romans 8:9; NIV), and that the fruit of the indwelling Spirit **"is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance . . ."** (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Temperance may be more accurately translated, "self-control." As such, it has a much broader meaning than just abstinence. It includes Spirit-controlled living in every activity—drinking, eating, sleeping, dressing, working, pleasure. And thus we can once again be assured that God is concerned about our physical well-being in the here and now, and that He through His Spirit is working to make us whole.

D.R.S.

selected by editors

Health is a blessing of which few appreciate the value; yet upon it the efficiency of our mental and physical powers largely depends. Our impulses and passion have their seat in the body, and it must be kept in the best condition physically, and under the most spiritual influences, in order that our talents may be put to the highest use.

Anything that lessens physical strength enfeebles the mind, and makes it less capable of discriminating between right and wrong. We become less capable of choosing the good, and have less strength of will to do that which we know to be right.

The misuse of our physical powers shortens the period of time in which our lives can be used for the glory of God. And it unfits us to accomplish the work God has given us to do. By allowing ourselves to form wrong habits, by keeping late hours, by gratifying appetite at the expense of health, we lay the foundation for feebleness. By neglecting physical exercise, by overworking mind or body, we unbalance the nervous system. Those who thus shorten their lives and unfit themselves for service by disregarding nature's laws, are guilty of robbery toward God. And they are robbing their fellow-men also. The opportunity of blessing others, the very work for which God sent them into the world, has by their own course of action been cut short. And they have fitted themselves to do even that which in a briefer period of time they might have accomplished. The Lord holds us guilty when by our injurious habits we thus deprive the world of good.

Transgression of physical law is transgression of the moral law; for God is as truly the author of physical laws as He is the author of the moral law. His law is written with His own finger upon every nerve, every muscle, every faculty, which has been entrusted to man. And every misuse of any part of our organism is a violation of that law.

All should have intelligent knowledge of the human frame, that they may keep their bodies in the condition necessary to do the work of the Lord. The physical life is to be carefully preserved and developed, that through humanity the divine nature may be revealed in its fulness. The relation of the physical organism to the spiritual life is one of the most important branches of education. It should receive careful attention in the home and in the school. All need to become acquainted with their physical structure and the laws that control natural life. He who remains in willing ignorance of the laws of his physical being, and who violates them through ignorance, is sinning against God. All should place themselves in the best possible relation to life and health. Our habits should be brought under the control of a mind that is itself under the control of God.

"Know ye not," says the apostle Paul, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

Taken from *Christ's Object Lessons*, by Ellen G. White, pp. 346-348.

Key passage:
I Corinthians 6:19,
20

Notes

by David C. Neiman

Key passage:
Psalm 67

Notes

Definition of Health—The state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being, and not merely the absence of disease.¹

Definition of Physical Fitness—Energy, vim, vitality to accomplish your daily work—including active leisure time pursuits and occasional emergencies. This energy is provided by a trained body with a strong, efficient heart-lung-blood vessel system, a strong, enduring, flexible musculature, and a good digestion.²

"Joie de vivre" is a delightful French expression that means more than merely the "joy of living." Enthusiasm, optimism and buoyancy are all implied within the term. Health is desirable for this reason in that it is the foundation of joyous and zestful life. Health may add years to your life, but more importantly, health will add life to your years!

Unfortunately, however, the average American has adopted a lifestyle that tends to neither add years to life nor life to years. To a great extent, this is because this lifestyle is one that tends to largely ignore God's *law of motion*. In nature this law is plainly seen in the orbiting planets and stars, the circulating ocean currents and the pounding surf, the flowers that open and close, the swaying trees, and the rushing streams.

But if anything was designed to move, it is man and woman—the crowning work of God's creation. In fact, from the beginning God had designed for Adam and Eve a program of exercise, putting them in the Garden of Eden "to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15; NIV). After they sinned, God intensified their exercise—"by the sweat of your brow" . . . "through painful toil" (Genesis 3:18, 17; NIV)—to help restore their lost heritage, to bring them back to their original state. But ever since God gave this command, mankind has done everything possible to eliminate the "sweat" part of the work ethic, so that today men and women have nearly lost the use of their arms and legs. We are now in a situation where the conscientious among us must daily plan to accomplish the exercise that once was an automatic part of daily living. Exercise must now be systematized, formalized, planned and scheduled, for our work no longer gives us the necessary activity we need.

Americans, however, have compounded their problem of a lack of activity with an improper diet—a diet high in what some nutritionists call the "deadly three": sugar, fat and salt. These substances pollute the American diet as food manufacturers use them liberally in all processed foods (housewives, it should be noted, however, are using smaller and smaller amounts in the home). In addition to this poor food quality, Americans consume too many total calories relative to their caloric expenditure. And to top it all off, the way Americans eat their food is very unhealthy: too much, too late in the day, along with in-between-meal snacks and hurried breakfasts and lunches.

When you take a sedentary American who is eating too much of the wrong kind of food at the wrong times of the day and *then* tack on various "recreational chemicals" such as caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, over-the-counter drugs and pleasure drugs. . . . *Is it any wonder that the average American does not "feel good," does not experience "joie de vivre?"*

"More importantly, health will add life to your years!"

¹ World Health Organization

² Adapted from H. Harrison Clarke, School of Health and Physical Education, University of Oregon.

by editors

As an amateur 3.5 to 4 mile-a-day runner, I have some definite reasons for taking that first step out of my warm, somewhat comfortable dorm room into a snow-packed, Nebraska-styled Siberia in January. There are also reasons as to why I reluctantly squirm out of that same, but now air-conditioned, dry, non-perspiring dorm, into a scalding, sweat-producing August day.

First, experts tell me my heart will become stronger if I exercise. It won't have to beat as often to move blood through my bloodstream, and can therefore last longer. (I know this works. A few years ago, my heart rate was reduced from 63 to 48 beats a minute during the summer's workout.) Then, exercise physiologists and the like maintain that running not only exercises almost every major body part, but is significant in reducing the fat and cholesterol levels in the bloodstream as well.

But these health benefits and others like them are widely publicized and well known. And they are also long-term benefits. That is, one must wait at least weeks (if not even years) before seeing the effects in his body.

There are two other benefits to a running program, however, both immediately visible, that keep me logging mile after mile. First, I really like food. I'm 5'7" and weigh 140 pounds, and do not have a high metabolism rate. At the moment, my stomach is behind and underneath my belt buckle. It wouldn't stay there, though, if I didn't jog four miles a day.

Second, a 20-minute afternoon snooze, a hot-cold shower in the morning, or a glass of lemonade sometime do a pretty good job of refreshing me. But nothing refreshes me day after day and season after season like running. It can clear my sinuses and stop me from sneezing in August, or it can loosen me up and relax me, preparing me to once again "attack" the books, during finals week. In fact, I am not even the same person after running that I was before.

Now with all these reasons for taking up jogging, let me give some advice on how to go about doing it.

1. If you haven't had a physical checkup lately—get one before starting. A jogging program has enough side effects of its own without an unknown ailment to complicate things.

2. Get a good pair of running shoes. This is the only basic piece of equipment the runner needs to be careful about. Talk to a local jobber-sports enthusiast, or a salesperson in a sporting goods shop for details.

Buying the wrong shoes and the resulting pain once kept me from entering a cross-country race, and they could conceivably cost one a jogging career, too.

3. Stretch! At least 10-15 minutes before and after jogging. This is absolutely necessary to loosen you up—and help you stay that way.

4. Be organized. Know how far you're going to run before starting. You can measure your running by distance or by time. But whichever, practice what joggers call LSD: Long Slow Distances.¹ You basically want to cover territory, not gain speed. You might even want to run a set distance then walk, then run again—repeating this process several times.

5. Go slow and at your own pace. Don't strain yourself. And don't begin by jogging too fast or too far.

D.R.S

Key passage:
Jeremiah 12:5

Notes

¹ Jack Batten, *The Complete Jogger*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., p. 22.

by editors

Key passage:
Genesis 4:9

Notes

Concern for healthful living can take on some dreadfully selfish characteristics. By those who are not like-minded with the health-conscious ones, healthful living can be interpreted as over-concern for one's body and self—at the expense of concern for others. And unfortunately, this could at times be a true-to-life characterization. For the experience of most has been to consider the topic of health as something very personal. It is concerned with me or with you, but only incidentally with us both in community.

For example, the vegetarian lifestyle is often pushed because of its personal effects on the individual's physical health. The vegetarian usually maintains a lower cholesterol level than nonvegetarians, and has a lesser chance of having heart disease. Studies have also shown that certain types of cancers occur more frequently among meat eaters than among herbivores.

But as the Christian's level of social awareness is raised, the individual, and sometimes even selfish, concerns of health are supplemented with social and community concerns. For, in today's world, with the grave population, economic and agricultural problems that face humanity, the social dimensions of healthful living come to the forefront.

For example, there are 460 million people actually starving in the world today.¹ But think of the impact a vegetarian diet, adopted by a significant number of well-fed people, could have on the starving millions! The lower one eats on the food chain, the more food is available for others to consume. (Because, for example, "An acre of cereals can produce *five times* more protein than an acre devoted to meat production: legumes . . . can produce *ten times* more; and leafy vegetables *fifteen times* more."² Hence the social implications of healthful eating.

Using the example of a vegetarian diet, the connection between personal and social well-being is most evident. And if one were to explore this connection relative to other matters of healthful living, he would find this bond between individual and community health to be just as strong. Because man is a social animal, he cannot consider his well-being, or the well-being of other individuals, in isolation from the society. We are all part of humanity's great web; and what affects the one affects to a degree the whole.

But because of traditional Adventism's holistic approach to man, the social dimension of health might not be overlooked. For a person is defined not only spiritually, mentally and physically, but socially as well. Each of these aspects intertwine, and neither may be addressed in attempted isolation without doing harm to the whole.

The charge still stands: that often our concerns for healthful living are quite individualistic and self-centered. But through God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, there is hope that there might be established a sense of brotherhood with all mankind, and from this that there arise concern for the health of humanity—both individually and in community.

¹ Ronald J. Snider, *Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), p. 32.

² Frances Moore Lappe', *Diet for a Small Planet*. (Random House, Inc., New York, Ballantine Books), 1975, p. 10.



by William Barclay

Notes

Editor's Note: Below William Barclay writes a very fair and objective piece on the Christian's view of alcohol. Some of what he says may be surprising and readers may find that some statements disagree with their traditional beliefs. But that's okay. Carefully study and weigh the following information for yourself.

[The] pleasure of drink, of alcohol . . . is by far the commonest pleasure, and by far the most controversial. To take only one form of drinking, in one year the production of beer was 29,500,000 barrels, and the amount drunk was 1,032,000,000 gallons. In the ten years between 1955 and 1965 the convictions in the police courts for drunkenness increased by 60 per cent. There are at least 400,000 alcoholics in Britain, of whom one in every five is a woman. In the case of gambling and drug-taking, the actual evidence from scripture is scanty and meagre; in the case of drink it is plentiful and abundant, but by no means consistent. . . .

i. There are many passages in the Old Testament where the excellence of wine is praised and its use commended. It was a regular part of the equipment of the temple, although not for the priests on duty (1 Chronicles 9:29). It was part of the first-fruits to which the Levites were entitled (Deuteronomy 18:4). 'Wine or strong drink or whatever your appetite craves . . . you shall eat before the Lord and rejoice.' Wine was a regular part of the daily sacrifice (Exodus 29:40). Wine was a standard part of the sacrificial system (Numbers 15:5-10; 28:7-14).

Wine is the symbol of that which is best and most joyous. Only love is better than wine (Song of Solomon 1:2, 4; 4:10; 7:9). Wine is part of Wisdom's feast (Proverbs 9:2, 5). Wine cheers gods and men (Judges 9:13). God gave it to gladden the heart of man (Psalm 104:15). . . . 'Go your way,' says the Preacher. 'Eat your bread with enjoyment, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.' 'Bread is made for laughter and wine gladdens life, and [an odd sentiment to find in scripture!] money answers everything' (Ecclesiastes 9:7; 10:19).

"Wine is the symbol of that which is best and most joyous"

The Old Testament has much to say about the joy and the delight of the God-given wine.¹

ii. But there is another side in the Old Testament. The Old Testament was acutely aware of the danger of wine. Very naturally the prudent Wisdom literature emphasises this. 'Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise' (Proverbs 20:1). 'He who loves wine and oil will not be rich' (Proverbs 21:17). 'The drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty' (Proverbs 21:17; 23:20) [See Proverbs 23:29-35; 31:4-7.]

It is only to be expected that the prophets with their strong ethical bent would be very much aware of the dangers of wine. 'Wine and new wine,' says Hosea, 'will take away the understanding' (Hosea 4:11). 'Princes become sick with the heat of wine (Hosea 7:5). 'Wine is treacherous' (Habakkuk 2:5).

"To the sin of drunkenness the prophets are merciless"

To the sin of drunkenness the prophets are merciless. 'Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim,' says Isaiah (Isaiah 28:1). 'They also reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink; they err in vision; they stumble in giving judgment. For all tables are full of vomit; no place is without filthiness' (Isaiah 28:7, 8). 'Woe to them who rise early in the morning that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late in the evening till wine inflames them' (Isaiah 5:11). . . .

To put it briefly—the Old Testament looks on wine as one of the good gifts of God; it nowhere demands total abstinence from it; but there is no book which is more intensely aware of its dangers, and which more unsparingly condemns its misuse. . . .

In the New Testament the material is not so extensive, but we meet with the same general attitude. . . . Paul can send advice to Timothy: ‘No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments’ (I Timothy 5:23).

But the voice of warning is there. The bad servant in the parable eats and drinks with the drunken (Matthew 24:29). ‘Do not get drunk with wine,’ says Paul, ‘For that is debauchery’ (Ephesians 5:18). When the New Testament lists sins, sins in which the Christian must have no part, revelry, drunkenness, carousing regularly appear among the forbidden things (Romans 13:13; I Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21). There are even times when drunken conduct invades the church and its Love Feasts (I Corinthians 11:21; 2 Peter 2:13). . . . In particular those who hold office in the church are warned against any excess. There must be no association with a drunkard (I Corinthians 5:11). The older women are not to be addicted to drink (Titus 2:3). The deacons are not to be slaves to wine, and the bishop is not to be a drunkard (I Timothy 3:8; 3:3; Titus 1:7). . . .

This, then, is the New Testament evidence. Once again there is nowhere any demand for total abstinence, neither in the words nor in the example of Jesus or of his followers, but there is a strong warning against the misuse and the danger of drink. In this case we have no rule and regulation on which to fall back.

Before we begin to work out a view of this question of total abstinence or of the Christian attitude to the use of alcohol, we may note that this is a comparatively new question. We have already seen that neither in the Old Testament nor in the New Testament did the demand arise. Nor were the reformers against the use of alcohol. Luther enjoyed his wine and his beer. When he was hidden away in the castle of the Wartburg, he wrote to Spalatin: ‘As for me, I sit here all day long, at ease with my wine. I am reading the Bible in Greek and Hebrew. . . . ‘Luther says in a 1522 Wittenberg sermon that the work that was in progress was none of his doing; it was the work of the Word of God. ‘I simply taught, preached and wrote God’s work; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept (cf. Mark 4:26-29), or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip (Melanchthon) and (Nicholas von) Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the Papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. . . .’ It did not occur to Luther to abstain from alcohol. Nor did it strike the early Methodists. Charles Wesley writes to his wife Sally that ‘a glass of wine helps him in his indispositions. And he always carries his own Madeira with him on his journeys’ (Frederick C. Gill, *Charles Wesley, the First Methodist*, p. 174.). When George Whitefield set off for America, amidst a host of other stores he took with him ‘a firkin of butter, a cheshire cheese, a Gloucestershire cheese, one hundred lemons, two hogsheads of fine white wine, three barrels of raisins’ (Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, p. 144). The practice of Thomas Chalmers of Disruption fame is interesting. His resolution was ‘not to take more than three glasses of wine at a sitting.’ Dr. McDonald of Ferintosh, was so famous a preacher that he was known as the Apostle of the North. Cunningham the historian tells us of him: ‘Twelve or fifteen glasses of whisky daily rejoiced his heart and simply produced a pleasant glow upon his countenance’ (Ian Henderson, *Scotland: Kirk and People*, pp. 100, 101). From another source we learn that in September 1824 in Glasgow, Thomas Chalmers’s cellar was composed of: 71 bottles of Madeira; 41 of port; 14 of sherry; 22 of Teneriffer; 10 of claret; and 44 of whisky.

There is no demand for total abstinence, but strong warning against misuse

“Wittenberg beer”?

“Twelve or fifteen glasses of whisky daily rejoiced his heart”

On the other hand, William Booth was inflexibly opposed to the use of alcohol. In the conditions of his day he could not use it. Richard Collier describes the London scene: 'London's 100,000 pubs, laid end to end, would have stretched a full thirty miles. In East London alone, the heart of Booth's territory, every fifth shop was a gin-shop; most kept special steps to help even tiny mites reach the counter. The pubs featured penny glasses of gin for children; too often child alcoholics needed the stomach-pump. Children less than five years old knew the raging agonies of delirium tremens or died from cirrhosis of the liver. Others trudged through the Sunday streets bringing yet more gin to parents who lay drunk and fully clothed in bed, vomiting on the floor. These were the products of a £100 million a year trade, whose worst victims slept on heaps of soot beneath the arches of Blackfriars Bridge, living only for the next glass' (Richard Collier, *The General Next to God*, p. 53). On practical grounds, Booth was unalterably opposed to the use of alcohol, and his Salvationists were and are pledged to total abstinence.

i. The prevalence of the use of alcohol in all grades of society is ample proof of its attraction. It makes entertaining easy; it relaxes tensions and eases the atmosphere of a social occasion. There is the occasional medical use of it, of which even Paul's advice to Timothy is an example. We need not argue about the attraction; it is there.

ii. But in addition to the attraction there are obvious dangers.

(a) There is the fact that the effect of alcohol on a man is quite unpredictable. One man may be able to take it in even large quantities with no visible ill effect; another man may be liable to become drunk on the smallest quantity; another man may have that built into his composition which makes him an alcoholic, and he may be such that any use of alcohol will have the most disastrous effects. None of these effects can be predicted in advance. Only experiment shows how a man will react, and it can be argued that the experiment carries with it such a risk that it is unwise to make it.

(b) There is the danger of excess. It is quite true that the danger of excess arises with any pleasure, and that scripture warns against gluttony just as strongly as it warns against drunkenness. But drunkenness is a specially ugly thing in a drunken person, and a specially unhappy thing for those with whom he lives and who share his life and home.

(c) With alcohol there arises the question of addiction. One of the characteristics of alcohol is that, as time goes on, it requires an ever-increasing amount of it to produce the same effect. What in the beginning was a pleasure becomes in the end an overmastering desire. The habit is formed, and the habit is desperately hard to break. A man will do well to think whether it is wise to begin something to which he may well end by becoming a slave.

(d) There is the matter of expense. Drinking is nowadays one of the most expensive pleasures; and a man may well find himself spending money on a luxury which should have been kept for the necessities.

(e) There are the general effects of alcohol. It can impair a man's efficiency and dull his brain. It can slow down his reflexes and his reactions, which is why the law is so stern to those who drive a motor car under its influence. It can slur a man's speech. But it has one effect which is more serious in its own way than any of the others. Alcohol does not only relax tensions; it also relaxes a man's self-control and renders him liable to do and to say things which in his sober senses he would not do or say. In particular, it loosens a person's moral control, and sexual immorality and alcohol very often have a very close connection. Alcohol, especially if it is used to excess, can make a man behave in ways in which he would not ordinarily behave. There is therefore in alcohol an inbuilt danger.

"The effect of alcohol on a man is quite unpredictable"

"The habit is formed, and the habit is desperately hard to break"

All this is true, but all this does not settle the matter. All that has been said could be said of almost any pleasure that has got out of control. There are many drugs which are at one and the same time dangerous drugs and useful drugs. There are many habits which are useful in moderation but harmful in excess. If the man who takes alcohol risks danger to his stomach and to his liver, the man who smokes risks danger to his lungs, and the man who consistently eats too much and moves too little risks the stomach ulcer. . . . The physical danger argument is not a good argument, for a man might answer quite simply that he is aware of the danger and that he chooses to face it.

In the last analysis the only argument against the misuse of alcohol is the argument from responsibility for our brother-man. We have here the old tension between freedom and responsibility. Paul is quite clear that no man has any right to lay down what any other man may eat or drink (Colossians 2:21). The classic passage is in Romans 14:1-8. There Paul refuses to arbitrate between those who hold different ideas of what it is right to do. If a man holds that what he does is as far as he is concerned right in the sight of God, then no one can criticise. On the other hand, there is the responsibility never to cause a brother to stumble or fall by what we eat or drink (I Corinthians 8:13; Romans 14:20, 21). The liberty of the strong must never become a stumbling block to the weak (I Corinthians 8:9). Certainly, all things are lawful, but all things are not helpful, and nothing must be allowed to master us (I Corinthians 6:12).

But even this does not free us from making our own personal choice. The biblical writers, Paul, Jesus himself knew the dangers of drink as well as we do, for every age has known what drunkenness means, and yet, while they unhesitatingly condemned excess, they never demanded total abstention. The decision is left to us, and on soul and conscience we must make it, and some will decide one way and some another—and they have liberty to do so.

The one thing to avoid is a censorious self-righteousness. W. M. McGregor, in *The Making of a Preacher*, says; 'Nearly sixty years ago I knew a crusty, ill-tempered woman, who lived alone in one very dismal room, with no apparent means of support but her parish allowance and occasional charity. Her neighbours resented her caustic tongue, so her solitude was seldom invaded, but at vague intervals she started on a pilgrimage among old acquaintances, from each of whom she exacted a contribution of at least one penny, and on the proceeds of the tour she got satisfactorily drunk. The deliberation of what she did gave it an ugly look, and she was appealed to and denounced as peculiarly a sinner, but only once, as I was told, did she retort: "Wad ye grudge me my one chance o' getting clean out o' the Pans wi' a sup of whisky?"' Her one chance of escape from the pans, the grim slum in which she lived, was occasionally to drink.

Whatever else we say, and whatever stand we adopt, those of us who have comfortable and happy homes should not be too hard on the person whose only club is the pub; those of us who have many friends should not be too hard on the lonely one who turns to the public house for company; those of us who have no fears and tensions should not be too hard on the person who seeks to relax with drink.

We can do no more than leave the verdict in suspense for each man to make his own decision. We are not the keeper of any man's conscience. But let the man who emerges with one verdict not condemn the man who emerges with another.

In life there must be pleasure, and the ideal pleasure is that which is harmless to the person who indulges in it and to all other people, which brings help to him who practises it and happiness to others.

"The only argument against the misuse of alcohol is the argument of responsibility for our brother-man"

"The one thing to avoid is a censorious self-righteousness"

¹ See Lamentation 2:12; Genesis 27:37; I Samuel 16:20; 25:18; II Samuel 16:1; I Chronicle 12:40; II Chronicle 2:10, 15; Nehemiah 5:11, 18; 10:37, 39; 13:5, 12; Job 1:2; Jeremiah 40:10, 12; Deuteronomy 28:39; Isaiah 16:10; 24:6; Isaiah 24:7, 11; Isaiah 55:1; Hosea 9:2; Job 1:10; Amos 5:11; Micah 6:15; Zepl aniah 1:13; Number 6:3; Jeremiah 35.

William Barclay, *Ethic in a Permissive Soc ety*, Harper & Row Publishers, Inc 1971, pp. 131-145.

REACT

1. Re the introductory article for this week's lesson, what do you think was the author's purpose in relating this experience?

Could this situation have taken place as described in an Adventist church? Explain.

Do we at times establish around ourselves an atmosphere of "purity," but one in which there is little healing? An atmosphere of alienation, rejection and guilt, rather than of acceptance and love? Explain.

2. The Bible says, "Wine or strong drink or whatever your appetite craves . . . you shall eat before the Lord and rejoice" (See Deut. 14:26). How do you interpret this statement?

What is your reaction to Barclay's article on "A Christian View of Alcohol"?

3. Do you remember that last ice-cream cone you ate? What flavor was it? How many scoops? Was it on a sugar cone? . . . Was it a sin?

4. Is it true that consuming anything known to be detrimental to one's health is a sin?

Is there a balance between healthful living and pleasure? Must one always win out over the other? I.e., in a trade-off between immediate pleasure and the most healthful action, should health always win, or should pleasure?

5. How important is healthful living to you?

Gifts Of The Spirit



"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant . . . the greatest of these is love."

— I Corinthians 12:1; 13:13

by Judy Wright

There were a half a dozen of us in the discussion group that Sabbath. The group leader had become such by virtue of having the birthday that was the closest to November 15. A xeroxed list of questions had been handed to each person, and, at our leader's suggestion, we were taking turns answering each one.

The first question was assigned to a girl in a blue dress. She thought for a moment, and then responded, "My ninth-grade teacher said something about this subject that I've always remembered. . . ."

The group leader listened carefully, and replied, "That's excellent! I never thought of it that way before!"

A man responded to the second question, "According to the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY. . . ."

And the group leader commented, "Yes, I remember being impressed by that when I studied the lesson this week, too."

The third question was answered by a quiet sort of young man who said, "Well, I think. . . ."

The group leader responded again, "I like that! That's a good thought!"

When we came to the last question on the page, a girl to the left of the group leader said, "There's something on that in the book *Story of Redemption* that has meant a lot to me."

The group leader responded with a

frown, saying, "Let's stick to the Bible and the Bible only, please!"

Opinions on spiritual gifts vary within the church. Our group leader that Sabbath was much more at ease accepting the spiritual gifts of wisdom or knowledge, (1 Cor. 12), than accepting the gift of prophecy. Perhaps there are others also who are more comfortable with pastors and teachers than they are with prophets. Or still others who find it easy to accept what has been established as a spiritual gift to the church, in the form of inspired writings, but not so easy to accept the spiritual gifts of those sitting next to them—or even their own gifts.

How can one judge the validity of the spiritual gifts of another member of the body of Christ? How do you know what spiritual gifts have been given to you? Which spiritual gifts do you think are the most important?

Paul taught that the subject of spiritual gifts was a valuable study for the church of Christ, for he said, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant" (1 Cor. 12:1). Hence, it is our study for this week's lesson.

by editors

Notes

This quarter we have been considering some of the basic doctrines of the church; this week we are studying the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives—the Spiritual gifts. It somehow seems inappropriate to study spiritual gifts as a “doctrine,” as their very nature eludes a full or comprehensive definition. But if we remember the inadequacy and anthropomorphic tendency of our language, we may more profitably study the work of this third member of the Godhead and the gifts He bestows.

The Holy Spirit figures prominently in the New Testament, beginning with the angel’s announcement to Mary: **“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee”** (Luke 1:35). At Jesus’ baptism, **“the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him,”** and **“immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness.”** After a brief sojourn, **“Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee”** and there announced, **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel. . . .”** (Luke 3:22; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:14, 18).

Clearly, the Son of God was dependent upon the inworking power of the Spirit as He worked to **“save his people from their sins”** (Matthew 1:21). And just as clear is the need for the Spirit’s power in the lives of Christians today. Hence, the perceptive prayer of Jesus on behalf of His followers: **“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever”** (John 14:16). This prayer was manifest as answered for the disciples while they tarried in Jerusalem. There, we read, **“When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness”** (Acts 4:31).

This outpouring of the blessing of the Holy Spirit was not a one-time incident. The Spirit was ever nurturing and leading the young church, as Luke writes: **“Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John . . .”** who **“began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 8:14, 17; NAS).

The New Testament suggests a variety of spiritual gifts which the believers received. Paul writes that **“in the church God had appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues”** (I Cor. 12:28; NIV). The fact that this whole chapter is devoted to the subject of spiritual gifts reveals their importance in the life of the church. The above list, however, is not all inclusive. Paul mentions other gifts as well, such as wisdom, knowledge, faith, intercessory prayer and the interpretation of tongues.

In the oft-quoted thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians, however, Paul could be said to summarize his views on spiritual gifts. Here he writes: **“And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. . . .”**

For **“now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love”** (vs. 1-2, 13; NIV).

D.R.S./E.B.S.

by Arthur L. White

Key passage:
I Corinthians 12:6

Notes

Ecstatic experiences were not uncommon among sincere Christians in the 1830's and the 1840's. Some who later became our spiritual forefathers were involved in them. These experiences may be noted as: (1) Physical prostration; (2) shouting the praises of God; (3) speaking in unknown tongues; (4) divine healing. As we look back from our position today there appears to be convincing evidence that some of these experiences were genuine. There is also evidence that some were counterfeit or were self-induced in periods of excitement. . . . As Ellen White recounts her early experience in the Advent Awakening before the visions were given to her, she reports a number of occasions when she was left prostrate by the overwhelming presence of the Spirit of God. One such experience is believed to have taken place in 1843:

"I bowed trembling during the prayers that were offered. After a few had prayed, I lifted up my voice in prayer before I was aware of it. . . . I praised God from the depths of my heart. Everything seemed shut out from me but Jesus and His glory, and I lost consciousness of what was passing around me. The Spirit of God rested upon me with such power that I was unable to go home that night.

"When I did return, on the following day, a great change had taken place in my mind. It seemed to me that I could hardly be the same person that left my father's house the previous evening. This passage was continually in my thoughts: 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.' My heart was full of happiness as I softly repeated these words." — *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 31.

In a vision given to her, probably very early in 1845, and soon after her first vision, which was given in December, 1844, she states: "My strength was taken away, and I fell to the floor. I seemed to be in the presence of the angels." — *Life Sketches*, p. 71.

Such experiences were repeated again and again. And there were times when others under the influence of the Spirit of God were prostrated. Writing of an experience shortly after her marriage in 1846 when she was very ill and the neighbors had given her up to die, she said, "Many prayers had been offered to God in my behalf, yet it pleased the Lord to try our faith. After others had prayed, Brother Henry [Nichols] commenced praying, and seemed much burdened, and with the power of God resting upon him, rose from his knees, came across the room, and laid his hands upon my head, saying, 'Sister Ellen, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole,' and fell back prostrated by the power of God. I believed that the work was of God, and the pain left me." — *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 84. . . .

In early 1850, six-month-old James Edson, the second son of James and Ellen White, was very ill. Here is the account as given by James White: "The babe was sick and Ellen anointed and prayed for him. The power came down more and more, and we all shouted and praised the Lord as much as we were a mind to. In this state of feelings among us Ellen was taken off in vision." — James White Letter to Leonard Hastings, Jan. 10, 1850.

Later in the year, at a conference held in Paris, Maine, the believers manifested their rejoicing in loud praises to God. Ellen White recounts the experience in a letter written November 7: . . .

"Sunday the power of God came upon us like a mighty rushing wind. All arose upon their feet and praised God with a loud voice; it was something as it was when the foundation of the house of God was laid.

"My strength was taken away and I fell to the floor"

The voice of weeping could not be told from the voice of shouting. It was a triumphant time; all were strengthened and refreshed. I never witnessed such a powerful time before." — Letter 28, 1850. . . .

There are in our early history four recorded experiences of speaking in tongues. The first took place in 1847 apparently to guide a young man to the ministry. The second, in 1848, involves a doctrinal point. The third, in 1849, gave guidance to [a] missionary endeavor, and the fourth, in 1851, is a report describing the witness of the Holy Spirit as He manifested "the presence and power of God."

Significantly, the second experience confirmed what was later discovered to be an unbiblical position, an error, which in time was corrected by Bible study. In this case the experience, involving persons of unquestioned integrity, proved unreliable and gave false guidance. But this is a story in itself.

Two names figure prominently in the early tongues experiences—Ralph and Chamberlain. The earliest tongues experience of which we have record is reported in an affidavit signed by early believers of unquestioned integrity who were well known as dependable, burden-bearing church members. . . .

"While at a meeting in North Paris, Maine, we think in the year of 1847 or 1848 . . . the Spirit of God was manifest in a special manner. Brother Ralph spoke in an unknown tongue. His message was directed to Brother J. N. Andrews; —that the Lord had called him to the work of the gospel ministry, and he must prepare himself for it. Brother E. L. H. Chamberlain immediately arose to his feet and interpreted what he had said." — Mrs. S. Howland, Mrs. Frances Howland Lunt, Mrs. Rebeckah Howland Winslow, N. N. Lunt, Battle Creek, Michigan. (In E. G. White Estate document file #311.)

The third tongues experience, in 1849, involved personal missionary endeavor. Hiram Edson related his experience with S. W. Rhodes in the *Present Truth* (December, 1849) a few days after the incidence.

S. W. Rhodes had worked diligently in the great Advent Awakening under William Miller's leadership. He was a man of means, but had dedicated his material resources to the spreading of the message. When the time of the expected advent of Christ had passed by, Rhodes was humiliated. He withdrew from public contact, secluding himself in the forests of upper New York State. He sustained himself by hunting and fishing, augmented by a little garden. Hiram Edson was aware of his whereabouts and on two different occasions journeyed by foot to the hideout and attempted to persuade Rhodes to join his brethren. Both attempts were unsuccessful.

On November 7, 1840, Edson began a third time to rescue Brother Rhodes. After walking 14 miles he felt constrained to turn back as he was impressed that the time had not come. With this matter uppermost in Elder Edson's mind, he attended a conference held at Centerport, New York, on Sabbath and Sunday, November 17, and 18, 1849. There he met Brethren Ralph and Belden from Connecticut and James and Ellen White from Maine. The report is that the meeting was "a refreshing season."

At the close of the conference Edson introduced Rhodes' case to Ralph, and he discovered that both he and Ralph were individually impressed that they had work to do together. That evening about six persons joined in a season of prayer over Rhodes' case. Elder Edson reported:

"There are in our early history four recorded experiences of speaking in tongues"

"Brother Ralph asked the Lord, in secret, to pour out His spirit upon us if it was His will that we should go after Brother Rhodes.

"The Spirit was poured out, and it settled upon us, so that the place was awful and glorious. While I was inquiring of the Lord if He had sent His servant so far to go with me to hunt up Brother Rhodes, at that moment Brother Ralph broke out in a new tongue, unknown to us all. Then came the interpretation— 'Yes to go with thee.' " — *Present Truth*, Dec. 1849, p. 35.

Now it was well known to the group that neither James nor Ellen White had faith in the interest that was felt for Rhodes; furthermore Ellen White had been explicit with her caution to Ralph "to be sure to get a clear duty from the Lord." She told him that she thought Edson's feelings for Rhodes were mere sympathy. Edson continues:

"The next morning we had a season of prayer, and the Spirit was richly poured out, and the Lord gave Sister White the following vision, which was contrary to her former opinion and feeling relating to our going after Brother Rhodes, up to the time that the Spirit took her off in vision." — *Ibid.* . . .

In the account almost an entire column is taken to present the vision. We quote a few lines:

"While in vision the angel pointed to the earth, where I saw Brother Rhodes in thick Darkness; but he still bore the image of Jesus. I saw that it was the will of God that Brethren Edson and Ralph should go after him. . . . I saw that Brethren Edson and Ralph should make him believe there was hope, and mercy for him, and tear him away, then he would come among the flock; and that angels would attend them on their journey." — Ellen G. White, in *Present Truth*, Dec. 1849.

Shortly after the vision Brethren Edson and Ralph started on their journey to find Rhodes. They found him at work in a field by the Black River. They told him that they had come in the name of the Lord, seeking his fellowship with them once more, that together they would go into the kingdom.

One point in connection with this experience is of particular interest, and that is the coolness of Ellen White toward the experience. Even after the demonstration of the unknown tongue, Mrs. White was unconvinced that the venture to attempt to rescue Brother Rhodes was in God's providence and was justified. Not until a vision was given to her directly by God did she place her endorsement on the efforts to recover Brother Rhodes. Brother Rhodes became a strong worker in God's cause, and the next year his name appeared on the masthead of the *Review and Herald* as a member of the publishing committee.

Taken from Arthur L. White's "Tongues In Early SDA History," *Charismatic Experiences in Early Seventh-day Adventist History*, a reprint of Twelve Articles. (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assoc.) p. 3.

"The Spirit was poured out . . . the place was awful and glorious"

by Roland Hegstad

Key passage:
 I Corinthians 12:3,

Notes

Wouldn't it be great to settle the tongues question with a simple declarative sentence: "The Biblical gift of tongues was _____"?

For a few moments at a charismatic conference in a Georgia youth camp, where a group of New Testament scholars and other specialists were meeting last January, I thought it was going to happen.

A Greek scholar arose to say that for years he had explained I Corinthians 14 on the basis of misused foreign languages; however, after a careful analysis, he had changed his position and was now teaching that chapter 14 is best explained on the basis of ecstatic utterance.

I was impressed. Perhaps here was the breakthrough we were seeking, based on a linguistic analysis of the chapter.

Alas, a moment later another Greek scholar arose to say that for years she had explained chapter 14 on the basis of ecstatic utterance; after careful analysis. . . . Yes, you guessed it: She is now teaching that foreign languages are the answer!

Even Bible commentaries waffle on the question, a number outlining two positions: The biblical gift was a divinely bestowed foreign language; the biblical gift was this and more—an ecstatic utterance called forth by the Holy Spirit for the believer's edification.

Is there, then, nothing more to be discovered about the biblical gift of tongues? Must our simple declarative sentence "The biblical gift of tongues was _____" be left blank? And if it must be, are we left without criteria to identify the modern manifestations of tongues as biblical or non-biblical?

Arguments for Tongues as a Foreign Language

In the face of neo-pentecostalism's rattling of denominational gates, its predictions of an explosion of spiritual dynamite in mainline church ranks through incursions of the charismatic, its penetration of some one hundred denominations already, its insistence that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is certified only by tongues speaking, and the miraculous manifestations that testify to a supernatural presence in the movement, the answer we must give is of no little significance.

If you are agreed, put on your thinking cap, secure your air hose, and plunge with me into the theological crosscurrents of tongues theology.

Here, in brief, are the major arguments, greatly condensed of course, for tongues as a foreign language and tongues as ecstatic utterance in I Corinthians 14.

First, six arguments for tongues as a language.

1. Throughout Acts tongues is a divinely bestowed foreign language. I Corinthians 14, an obscure passage, must be interpreted by Acts, not Acts by Corinthians.

2. God works through man's intelligence and places a premium upon intelligible communications; for Him to inspire an unintelligible utterance through the Holy Spirit would be incompatible with His own nature. It is the devil who inspires the unintelligible. Ecstatic utterance was a common form of communication from the gods of heathenism—the spirits "peep and mutter" (Isaiah 8:19). Would the Lord, who warned against meaningless "babbling on like heathen" (Matthew 6:7, NEB), inspire the meaningless repetition of gibberish? Men were made reasoning beings; that which inspires them to put their reason in the deep freeze, while thawing out their emotions for undirected excesses, is not of God.

"God places a premium upon intelligible communication!"

3. I Corinthians 14 itself shows that the gift was intelligible but being used wrongly. First, we are told that a man who speaks in tongues edifies himself. A man cannot be edified without comprehension. The speaker must, therefore, be conscious of what he is saying, though listeners may not be. Verse 22—"Where tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not"—shows that these tongues are real languages, to be used to bring unbelievers to the truth.

4. Paul's statement that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit" for the common good (I Corinthians 12:7) rules out using a gift for personal use. Since ecstatic utterance cannot profit others when used outside the church, where Paul implies the gift belongs, it cannot be a gift of the Spirit.

5. If we assume I Corinthians 14 is speaking of ecstatic utterances, we are confronted with irreconcilable contradictions. For example, Paul's assurance that tongues are for nonbelievers (verse 22) becomes incompatible with what he has said previously. One Bible translator, J. B. Phillips, here switches the negative and the positive and adds a footnote admitting that he has departed from the original manuscripts! An interpretation that calls for altering the original manuscripts should not commend itself to Bible-respecting Christians.

6. Even the casual reader will discern that Paul is censuring and correcting the Corinthian church for misusing a gift rather than describing a new form of tongues.

Arguments for Tongues as an Ecstatic Experience

Does the case for tongues as a foreign language convince you? Then it might be well to read no further. I have sat in a courtroom, after hearing one side of a case, and wondered how any sane person could doubt the defendant's guilt, only to wonder, after hearing the other side, why the defendant ever was brought into court on such flimsy evidence. If you do agree that fairness demands hearing both sides, proceed—and with an open mind, please. But not *too* open, lest evidence of merit trickle out before making an impression.

Tongues in Corinth could not be the same gift as that mentioned in Acts. Here are five reasons why not:

1. I Corinthians 14 contains too many substantial dissimilarities from Acts—some dozen or more in all—to be speaking of the same gift. For example: (a) At Pentecost, they were preaching in tongues; at Corinth, prayer, song, and thanks. (b) At Pentecost, interpretation was not needed to edify; at Corinth, hearers could be edified only if the tongues were translated. (c) At Pentecost, tongues were the equivalent of prophecy (that is, the teaching of the Word); at Corinth, they were distinct from teaching. (d) At Pentecost, tongues were essential if souls were to be saved; at Corinth, they were of minor importance; (e) At Pentecost, they were to convert unbelievers; at Corinth, to express gratitude to God. Enough substantial differences exist to warrant questioning use of the argument from analogy—that is, interpreting Corinth by Acts.

2. Even Bible translators recognize a distinction in the Greek in I Corinthians 14 and Acts 2, which is why they supply such words as "unknown" and "ecstatic" to modify tongues.

3. The gift of Acts 2 could be understood directly by the listeners; they were not dependent on an interpreter or translator. In Corinth the people needed an intermediary to make known the ecstatic utterance. Interpretation is listed as a separate gift. (See I Corinthians 12:10).

4. If the gift had been a foreign language, Paul would hardly have expended so many words criticizing it. Even had it been misused by

"A man cannot be edified without comprehension"

Enough substantial differences exist to question interpreting Corinth by Acts.

"If the gift had been a foreign language, Paul would hardly have expended so many words criticizing it"

being spoken in church, we would expect him to urge the Corinthian believers to go out and witness to the people who spoke the language. Foreign languages were the first great gift given the believers at Pentecost when they received the Holy Spirit. Can we really believe that that gift, so necessary to the spread of the gospel, would be placed at the bottom of the list of gifts, even below "helps"?

5. The great questions Paul asks in chapter 14 support the concept of ecstatic utterance. These questions are: What benefits, if any, does the church derive from this gift? Does its exercise advance spiritual fellowship? result in deeper understanding of truth and doctrine? Is communication with the world enhanced by its exercise? Are tongues a sign of Christian maturity or spiritual immaturity? Why does the gift of prophecy—that is, witnessing about Christ, the preaching of the Word—so far outrank tongues? These questions would make little sense if the issue was simply misuse of foreign languages.

Biblical Criteria for Evaluating Tongues

So there you have them, the arguments most often advanced in support of the two positions. There are others, of course, and the ones I have mentioned could be expanded.

Must we answer, then, that we have no way of identifying modern tongues as biblical or non-biblical?

Confessing that we (I use "we" here in pious confidence that there are other honest souls!) do not know precisely what tongues was in the Corinthian church is far from saying that we have no information on the Biblical gift of tongues, which everywhere but Corinth, at least, was a foreign language. And it is far from saying that we are left without Biblical and other criteria by which to appraise modern tongues. The counsel Paul gives to the Corinthians goes a long way toward invalidating most of what today passes for tongues. Other principles of Scripture combine to make us wholesomely suspicious not only of contemporary tongues but of the modern tongues movement for which it speaks.

First off, Paul speaks to us across the centuries: When confronted with a difficult church problem, one that threatens the unity of the church, meet it in the context of the superiority of love.

Paul plainly rebuts the idea that tongues is the sign of baptism by the Holy Spirit. "Do all speak with tongues [of ecstasy]?" he asks (I Corinthians 12:29, 30). If the Pentecostal is right, the answer must be Yes, all Spirit-filled Christians must speak in tongues. But Paul's answer is No. He places tongues at the bottom of the list of gifts, even below "helps," and then urges the Corinthians to aim at the higher gifts (verse 31). Because not everyone receives the same gift, all of which, collectively, are as necessary to the whole church as organs are to the whole man, all church members must share their gifts, without any member either despising or envying another with a different gift. Unity of the church, Paul stresses, *must take priority over the exercise of any gift*. In fact, according to Ephesians 4:11-13, the gifts are to be used to promote the unity of the church. (This fact should haunt members who have fragmented congregations with their insistence that all must speak in tongues, if they are baptized by the Holy Spirit, and that the Christian who has not spoken in tongues is traveling second-class.). . . .

No, we didn't answer all the questions on tongues at that conference. . . . But since when has mature faith, on which the Bible places a premium, demanded answers to everything?

"The counsel Paul gives to the Corinthians goes a long way toward invalidating most of what today passes for tongues"

Roland Hegstad, "What Is the Biblical Gift of Tongues," *These Times*, March 1974, pp. 17-19.

by Julia McGuire

Key passage:
I Corinthians 12:11

Notes

How does one write a *How To* article on spiritual gifts?

For example, if you were asked to write an article on "How to have the gift of prophecy," what could you give as the practical steps involved?

Too hard? Then what about this: "How to have the gift of helps?" You could perhaps list such "how to" steps as 1) Become more aware of those in need, and 2) Reserve a specific and regular amount of time each week to devote to helpful activities. But you would still be missing the mark. For it is simply not possible to outline steps for "getting" certain gifts—as if these gifts were objects to be bartered for. Hence, the possible inappropriateness of a *How To* article for this week's lesson.

Nevertheless, after spending a significant amount of time thinking about this subject, I have thought of some suggestions you might want to keep in mind as you ponder this week's topic.

1. Remember that spiritual gifts cannot be measured or judged—like one would measure talent. Spiritual gifts are not separate "things" to be weighed and evaluated. For who can judge the gifts of the divine? Rather, the Spirit apports as He wills—and He may not clue us in on how He has done this.

Thus, we cannot claim that one who has, for example, not won any souls to Christ *per se* hasn't received the gifts of the Spirit. For that person's gifts may be manifest in gentleness, understanding and peacemaking, or in some other areas that perhaps only the Spirit Himself is aware of. The fact is, we do a very grave injustice to the Lord and others by trying to measure spiritual gifts by service. It is not ours to judge the Spirit's diverse gifts, but only to receive them and then give them back to God in glory.

2. Do not fear spiritual gifts. In the past, I came to fear and dread the gifts of the Spirit. I suppose that sensing the void of the Holy Spirit as a dominant force in my life was instrumental in creating such feelings. I never felt complete because I was convinced that I lacked the gifts of the Spirit—as I had learned to define them—and I equated the presence of the Holy Spirit with the presence of spiritual gifts.

But then I discovered the promise of Jesus in John 14:18: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." And, verses 16-17: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever . . . you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you" (NIV). I then knew that I had the Spirit of God within me, and therefore His gifts—even if such had so far gone unrecognized.

I feared the gifts of the Spirit for a couple of other reasons too, however: I feared that spiritual gifts both required some great talent, and also demanded abnormal, strange behavior on the part of the recipient. But then I realized two things: 1) that the gifts of the Spirit are not conditional upon my inherited or developed ability and talents, and 2) that although the Holy Spirit does work to change lives, He is not in the business of developing people into obnoxious bores.

3. Finally, remember that the important thing is to live your life each day in response to the Spirit of God—so your entire being may be a manifestation of the Spirit's gifts.

Worthlessness Of All Gifts Without Love

□ November 2
Friday

OPINION

selected by editors

As the succeeding chapter [I Cor. 14] will show, tongues-speaking was a particularly troublesome problem in the Corinthian church. Paul begins his comparison of gifts by declaring how meaningless this gift is without love. . . . Love is the disposition that brings sense out of attempted communication, while the lack of love reduces the vocal sounds to noise.

Love is a key concept for Paul—but perhaps “concept” is a misnomer for what the apostle believes and teaches. His treatment of love in this chapter has been considered hymnic in quality, and its beauty and depth have made it indisputably classic. But love is rather a way of life for Paul. . . . The personality revealed in the letter to Philemon is evidence of this. . . .

This is why Paul can make love the critical factor in spiritual communication. Without love there can be no depth perception of God, who is love; so persons cannot understand each other in relation to God and the universe without love. The inner significance of the breakdown in communication at various levels today has been reflected by modern art and literature to a considerable degree in that their very forms are chosen for the sake of denying the communication of an intelligible idea of one person to another—since existence is absurd, art and literature must express absurdity. Perhaps this illustrates Paul’s point: the only disposition that makes communication possible is love, which must include acceptance of the other person as one who exists in his or her own right, willingness to listen to what the other person is saying, concern to communicate in language the other person can understand, and openness of good will aimed at the welfare of the other. . . .

As the issue of all this, *love never fails*; that is, it will never cease to operate and it will never become obsolescent or invalid. This is because it is the purpose and nature of God. Further, love is the only relationship by which human beings can exist together. Love is the irreducible spiritual gift. Paul singles out three other gifts prominent in the Corinthian church: *prophecy, tongues, and knowledge*. All of these will cease to function. The milieu in which they operate will one day come to an end and will be superseded by a situation in which they are inappropriate or unnecessary. Love, however, is perpetual and will never be set aside.

All spiritual gifts except love, therefore, can be characterized as *partial*. The prophet has only a fleeting glimpse of God; tongues are a means by which communication is intended in the present order; knowledge is now incomplete, for it is obtained by indirect observation rather than by direct participation in reality. . . .

Paul concludes by singling out the three enduring gifts: *faith, hope, and love*. All that he has just written demonstrates that one gift is *greatest: love*. It is at the heart of God’s nature, made known by Jesus Christ. It is therefore to be the object of our striving.

From the book, *The Anchor Bible*, by William F. Orr & James Arthur Walther, commenting authors. Copyright © 1976 by Doubleday & Co., Inc., pp. 193-297.

Key passage:
I Corinthians 13:1-

Notes

“Love brings sense out of attempted communication while the lack of love reduces the vocal sounds to noise”

“Love is the irreducible spiritual gift”

1. In this week's Testimony article by Arthur White, he mentions four types of ecstatic experiences which were not uncommon among the Adventist forefathers: 1) physical prostration, 2) shouting the praises of God, 3) speaking in unknown tongues and 4) divine healing.

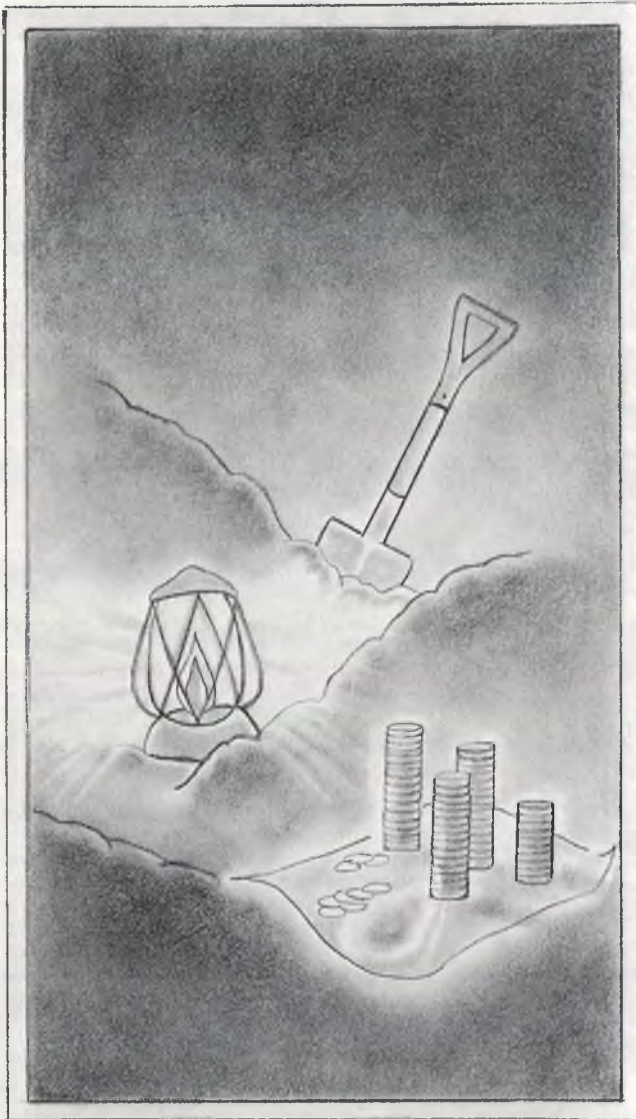
As the Advent movement has progressed, however, there have been increasingly fewer ecstatic experiences among believers. What do you believe is the reason for this decline? Do you believe the early experiences were Spirit-induced? Or is the decline evidence of the Spirit's orderly leading? Explain.

2. The biblical gift of tongues was ____ .
 - (a) a divinely bestowed ability with a foreign language.
 - (b) an ecstatic, Spirit-induced utterance.
 - (c) both of the above.
3. Are the gifts which the Spirit apportions to us individually in any way determined by our knowledge and understanding of these gifts?

What does Paul mean in I Corinthians 12:31 when he writes, "But covet earnestly the best gifts . . ."?

4. Paul places the gift of love above all the gifts of the Spirit, including faith and hope. How can this be? What are the implications of doing this?

The Christian And Money



“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”

— Romans 14:7

by Jack London

"But you can't do it, you know," friends said, to whom I applied for assistance in the matter of sinking myself down into the East End of London. "You had better see the police for a guide," they added. . . . "But I don't want to see the police," I protested. "What I wish to do, is to go down into the East End and see things for myself. I wish to know how those people are living there, and why they are living there, and what they are living for. In short, I am going to live there myself. . . ."

"But we know nothing of the East End. It is over there, somewhere." And they waved their hands vaguely in the direction where the sun on rare occasions may be seen to rise. . . . I departed with the address of a detective who lived in the East End, . . . In one minute I explained myself and my project, which he accepted as a matter of course. In the second minute he asked my age, height, and weight, and looked me over. And in the third minute, as we shook hands at parting, he said, "All right, Jack. I'll remember you and keep track."

I breathed a sigh of relief. Having built my ships behind me, I was now free to plunge into that human wilderness of which nobody seemed to know anything. . . .

Nowhere in the streets of London may one escape the sight of abject poverty, while five minutes' walk from almost any point will bring one to a slum; but the region my hansom was now penetrating was one unending slum We rolled along through miles of bricks and squalor, and from each cross street and alley flashed long vistas of bricks and misery. Here and there lurched a drunken man or woman, and the air was obscene with sounds of jangling and squabbling. At a market, totterly old men and women were searching in the garbage thrown in the mud for rotten potatoes, beans, and

vegetables, while little children clustered like flies around a festering mass of fruit, thrusting their arms to the shoulders into the liquid corruption, and drawing forth morsels, but partially decayed, which they devoured on the spot. . . .

Where sights and sounds abound which neither you nor I would care to have our children see and hear is a place where no man's children should live, and see and hear. Where you and I would not care to have our wives pass their lives is a place where no other man's wife should have to pass her life. For here, in the East End, the obscenities and brute vulgarities of life are rampant. There is no privacy. The bad corrupts the good, and all fester together. Innocent childhood is sweet and beautiful; but in East London innocence is a fleeting thing, and you must catch them before they crawl out of the cradle, or you will find the very babes as unholily wise as you.

The application of the Golden Rule determines that East London is an unfit place in which to live. Where you would not have your own babe live, and develop, and gather to itself knowledge of life and the things of life, is not a fit place for the babes of other men to live, and develop, and gather to themselves knowledge of life and the things of life. It is a simple thing, this Golden Rule, and all that is required. Political economy and the survival of the fittest can go hang if they say otherwise. What is not good enough for you is not good enough for other men, and there's no more to be said.¹

In light of this situation, and countless others how can one define stewardship? And will our "tithes and offerings" fulfill the definition?

¹ Jack London, *The People of the Abyss*, Macmillan Publishing Co., pp. 1-8, 212, 213.

by editors

Notes

When we mention stewardship we often think of the Jewish system of tithing we have inherited. We remember the plan where God gave **"the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance" (Numbers 18:21)**. We remember how the Levites were set apart for full-time sacred service on behalf of Israel and had no time in which to earn their own living. The Lord therefore ordained that they should be supported by one-tenth, or a tithe, from the income.

We also remember the system of offerings the Hebrews practiced: **"Thither shall ye bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks" (Deut. 12:6)**. We recollect that God's followers were assured of His blessings if they brought all of their **"tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house."** For, He continues, **"Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10)**.

If we define stewardship as "the unselfish use of the resources God has given us" whether these resources be in the form of money, possessions, or circumstances, or the less tangible but no less useful gifts of time, health, intelligence, influence and abilities—we can understand it as having a much broader meaning. James recognized this when he wrote, **"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27)**. A necessary part of stewardship, then, is the efficient and effectual use of one's time, sympathy, talents and money in the care of those who are unable to adequately care for themselves.

Jesus spoke of this approach to stewardship often. He once asked a lawyer who inquired of Him what he must do to be saved. **"What is written in the law: how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:26-28)**. Jesus then added the story of the Good Samaritan to His reply, establishing a person's need as the basis for neighborly assistance. His conclusion was nothing but practical: **"Go and do as the Samaritan did."**

Paul, too accepted this concept of stewardship: **"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7)**. Whether we can appreciate it or not, our lives touch those of our neighbors. We therefore need a sympathetic awareness of their circumstances and outlook, and a willingness to meet their needs. We all have possessions whose use might benefit others besides ourselves—there are our homes, our gardens and their produce, our cars, our tools and our skills. Stewardship in such areas comes so easily for some and so hard for others. But it is possible for all who yield to the Spirit's promptings.

Thus, we are promised that if we give **"it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38)**.

D.R.S.

selected by editors

Key passage:
1 Peter 4:10

Notes

“We are laborers together with God,” — “stewards of the manifold grace of God.” The knowledge of God’s grace, the truths of His word, and temporal gifts as well, —time and means, talents and influence— are all a trust from God, to be employed to His glory and the salvation of men. Nothing can be more offensive to God, who is constantly bestowing His gifts upon man, than to see him selfishly grasping these gifts, and making no returns to the Giver. Jesus is to-day in heaven preparing mansions for those who love Him; yes, more than mansions, a kingdom which is to be ours. But all who shall inherit these blessings must be partakers of the self-denial and self-sacrifice of Christ for the good of others.¹

All that men receive of God’s bounty still belongs to God. Whatever He has bestowed in the valuable and beautiful things of earth, is placed in our hands to test us, —to sound the depths of our love for Him and our appreciation of His favors. Whether it be the treasures of wealth or of intellect, they are to be laid, a willing offering, at the feet of Jesus.

None of us can do without the blessing of God, but God can do His work without the aid of man, if He so chooses. But He has given to every man his work, and He trusts men with treasures of wealth or of intellect, as His stewards. Whatever we render to God is, through His mercy and generosity, placed to our account as faithful stewards. But we should ever realize that this is not a work of merit on man’s part. However great the ability of man, he possesses nothing which God did not give him, and which He cannot withdraw, if these precious tokens of his favor are not appreciated, and rightly applied. Angels of God, whose perceptions are unclouded by sin, recognize the endowments of Heaven as bestowed with the intention that they be returned in such a way as to add to the glory of the great Giver. With the sovereignty of God is bound up the well-being of man. The glory of God is the joy and the blessing of all created beings. When we seek to promote His glory, we are seeking for ourselves the highest good which it is possible for us to receive. Brethren and sisters in Christ, God calls for the consecration to His service of every faculty, of every gift, you have received from Him. He wants you to say, with David, “All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.”²

“All that men receive of God’s bounty still belongs to God”

¹ *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, pp. 731-732.

² *Testimonies*, Vol. 5, pp. 736-737.

by John Wesley

 Key passage:
 I Timothy 6:9

Notes

"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition." — I Tim. vi, 9.

How innumerable are the ill consequences which have followed from men's not knowing, or not considering this great truth! And how few are there even in the Christian world, that either know or duly consider it! . . .

The apostle does not here speak of gaining riches unjustly, but of quite another thing: his words are to be taken in their plain obvious sense, without any restriction or qualification whatsoever. St. Paul does not say, that they will be rich *by evil means*, by theft, robbery, oppression, or extortion; they that will be rich by fraud or dishonest art; but simply, "they that will be rich:" these, allowing, supposing the means they use to be ever so innocent, "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

But who believes that? Who receives it as the truth of God? Who is deeply convinced of it? Who preaches this? . . .

. . . let us consider, what it is to be rich? What does the apostle mean by this expression?

The preceding verse fixes the meaning of that; "Having food and raiment" (literally *coverings*; for the word includes lodging as well as clothes), "Let us be therewith content." "But they that will be rich;" that is, who will have more than these; more than food and coverings. — It plainly follows, whatever is more than these, is in the sense of the apostle, *riches*; whatever is above the plain necessities, or, at most, conveniences of life. Whoever has sufficient food to eat, and raiment to put on, with a place to lay his head, and something over, *is rich*. . . .

Oh ye lovers of money, hear the word of the Lord! Suppose ye that money, though multiplied as the sand of the sea, can give happiness? Then you are "given up to a strong delusion, to believe a lie:" a palpable lie, confuted daily by a thousand experiments. Open your eyes! Look all around you! Are the richest men the happiest? Have those the largest share of content, who have the largest possessions? Is not the very reverse true? . . . And let them be painted and gilded ever so finely, they are empty still. . . .

Many years ago I was sitting with a gentleman in London, who feared God greatly; and generally gave away, year by year, nine tenths of his yearly income. A servant came in and threw some coals on the fire. A puff of smoke came out. The baronet threw himself back in his chair and cried out, "Oh Mr. Wesley, these are the crosses I meet with daily!" Would he not have been less impatient, if he had had fifty, instead of five thousand pounds a year? . . .

Permit me to speak as freely of myself, as I would of another man. I *gain all I can* (namely by writing) without hurting either my soul or body. I *save all I can*, not willingly wasting any thing, not a sheet of paper, not a cup of water. I do not lay out any thing, not a shilling, unless as a sacrifice to God. Yet by *giving all I can*, I am effectually secured from "laying up treasures upon earth." Yea, and I am secured from either desiring or endeavoring it, as long as I give all I can. . . .

Lord speak! And even the rich men, that hear these words, shall enter thy kingdom; shall "take the kingdom of heaven by violence;" shall "sell all for the pearl of great price;" shall be "crucified to the world, and count all things, dung, that they may win Christ!"

"Let them be painted and gilded ever so finely, they are empty still"

From *Selections from the Writings of Rev. John Wesley*, Herbert Welch. Published by Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee, pp. 74, 75, 76, 86, 89, 84, 91.

by Dale Culbertson

Key passage:
II Corinthians 9:7, 8

Notes

In I Corinthians 3:1 and 2, Paul speaks to the believers about different levels of Christian living. Here he writes, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."

The Christian life, then, consists of stages. To be a Christian means not to have "arrived," but to be in a process of developing. This is important for all Christians to realize, for recognizing this fact and the stages of growth within oneself can enable a person to mature more easily from stage to stage. Paul Smith, in his book, *Managing God's Goods*, maintains that this is particularly true in the area of stewardship. Here, he outlines a five-stage process he sees for reaching maturity in giving.

"First stage: you donate reluctantly to things, receiving no real joy or satisfaction from it. Experiencing no partnership relation with the Creator, you have almost no feeling of donating to God, only to things. If something displeases you, you may not give at all, but instead look for excuses and reasons for not participating.

"Second stage: While you donate willingly to things, you still do not have the feeling of giving to God. Your readiness to contribute does make it acceptable to God, though it takes repeated appeals to get you to participate. Still you are not prepared for church emergencies, and if no one asks, you do not give.

"Third stage: You plan your donation to things. This planning helps you develop systematic benevolence. However, you fall short of your real potential as a child of God. You are often prepared to give in the event emergencies arise. You also contribute when you see needs in God's work or when God calls for help.

"Fourth stage: Recognizing God's ownership of everything you possess, you plan your offerings. You have the feeling that your gifts go to God, not to projects or programs. Now you no longer restrict your offerings to areas of personal interest, so that you have begun developing disinterested benevolence. Your offerings grow as God increases your income and/or purchasing power. Selfishness is leaving your life. Practicing self-denial, you go without some of the things you believe you need.

"Fifth stage: Having entered into a covenant of sacrifice with God, you and God are partners. Whenever you see a need or whenever He calls for help, you are ready to yield up any part or all of your possessions. God is directing your affairs. Your love and faith in Christ are obvious.

" 'Those whose hearts' are filled with the love of Christ, will follow the example of Him who for our sake became poor, that through His poverty we might be made rich. Money, time, influence—all the gifts they have received from God's hands, they will value only as a means of advancing the work of the Gospel. ' "

Managing God's Goods, by Paul G. Smith, Southern Publishing Assoc., 1973, pp. 58, 59.

by Doug Morgan

"Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:10). The giving of tithes and offerings is usually and correctly thought of as integral to a Christian's relationship with God. But in fact the Lord never actually receives our financial gifts. Our offerings are submitted to human beings for use by human beings. Refusing to give represents a lack of allegiance to God, but more tangibly it means failure to participate in the economic justice that is to characterize the Christian community. Because it is God's will that believers provide mutual support for each other's material needs, we are robbing God, according to Malachi, when we withhold the funds necessary to follow God's economic plan for His people.

The Old Testament plan for economic renewal is found in the jubilee prescriptions of Leviticus 25. Every fifty years the soil was to be left fallow, all debts remitted, slaves freed and property returned to the family of the original owner. Such radical economics perhaps would be as anachronistic today as the stoning of adulterers (Lev. 20:10) were it not for the fact that Jesus used the jubilee theme in describing His mission. In announcing to the synagogue of Nazareth that the hope of the messianic kingdom was being fulfilled in His own person and mission, Jesus used Isaiah 61 to declare the "platform" of His kingdom: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are downtrodden, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19; NASB).

For Jesus' Jewish listeners, the "favorable year of the Lord" meant precisely the jubilee year, a time in which social and economic inequities are erased and there is a new beginning. Thus, when Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, He was not talking about simply a spiritual kingdom, but as John Howard Yoder puts it, He was talking about "a new regime whose marks would be that rich would give to the poor, the captives would be freed, and men would have a new mentality (*metanoia*), if they believed this news."¹ Yoder goes on to say that the "kingdom of God is a social order and not a hidden one. . . . it is that concrete jubiliary obedience, in pardon and repentance, the possibility of which is proclaimed beginning right now, opening up the accessibility of a new order in which grace and justice are linked, which men have only to accept."²

The kingdom Jesus established is a community of believers whose economic and social life is guided by the jubilee principles. The common life of the early Jerusalem Christian community (Acts 2:44-45) and the generous giving of Hellenistic Christians to aid their Palestinian brothers and sisters (II Cor. 8) are New Testament examples of faithfulness to the jubilee economic concepts.

But what about today? The economic realities of the modern world may indeed lead us to conclude that the particulars of the jubilee laws are no longer applicable. However, if we wish to be faithful to the ethic of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus, we must be firmly committed to economic justice in the Christian community. Drastic inequities in the material well-being of Christians is a scandal to the gospel.

Indeed, the continued existence of economic and material want in the worldwide Christian community suggests a need for greater sensitivity to this problem on the part of Christians in affluent nations. The One who was rich, but for our sakes became poor (II Cor. 8:9) asks us, "Will a man rob God?"

Key passage:
Malachi 3:10

Notes

"The kingdom of God is a social order and not a hidden one"

¹ *The Politics of Jesus* by John Howard Yoder. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids MI 49503. © 1972. Used by permission pp. 39, 108.

² Yoder, p. 108.

REACT

1. What is your reaction to Jack London's article, "The People of the Abyss"?

People today are living under similar, and worse, conditions as those London encountered. He says, "What is not good enough for you is not good enough for other men, and there's no more to be said." In light of this understanding, what is the Christian's responsibility to the poor?

2. Malachi quotes Yahweh as saying, "Prove me now herewith . . . if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). Yet, some faithful tithe-payers go bankrupt and hungry. Explain.
3. Re the Opinion article for this week's lesson: Does the author imply that Christians should give only to fellow Christians, or that they should be given first priority? Is this valid?
4. What is your reaction to the How To article for this week's lesson, "Maturity and Giving"? Is the five-stage process Smith sees for reaching maturity in giving accurate? Explain.

What is the appropriate attitude and response for one who feels that the denominational leaders are misapplying funds?

The Church



“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

— I Corinthians 12:27

by Morris L. Venden

What is the worst possible reason for going to church that you can think of? What is the best possible reason? What is *your* reason for going to church—or what is your reason for *not* going to church?

Someone gave me a list one time of reasons "Why I Don't Go to the Movies." "I don't go to movies because I don't like crowds. I don't go to the movies because I can't sit still that long. I don't go to the movies because they always ask for money. I don't go to the movies because the people there aren't very friendly. I don't go to the movies because I never get a good seat. I don't go to movies because a lot of hypocrites and sinners go there. I don't go to the movies because the manager never comes to visit me. I don't go to the movies because when I have time away from work, I need to sleep."

Some of the reasons people give for not going to church don't stand up very well, even on the basis of logic and reason. But what about your reasons for *going* to church? Is it possible to go to church for the wrong reason?

There are at least three Bible reasons for church-going. The first is found in Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as we see the day approaching." So the first reason is that God has told us to go to church.

The second reason is found in I Corinthians 12:27: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." A body is not a body unless it hangs together. Perhaps you feel like an appendix today—but

don't be discouraged. I understand that even the appendix is needed on occasion. Every part of the body fits together to make the whole. And any part of the body that refuses to be joined to the rest of the body dies. It's a simple fact. Cut off a hand, and the body will keep on living—but the hand will die. You can cut the tail off a lizard, and it will keep wagging for a little while, but not for long. And although a lizard can grow a new tail, a tail can't grow a new lizard. It is only through union with the body that growth and life can continue.

The third reason for going to church is found in Luke 4:16: "And he [Jesus] came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." Jesus went to church.

If anyone ever had a good excuse to stay home and read the *Insight*, it was Jesus. If anyone ever had a good excuse to go for a walk by the lake instead of going to church, it was Jesus. Yet all throughout His life on this earth, it was His custom, His habit, His practice, to go to church on Sabbath.

His secret was that He did not go to church for what He got out of it. Jesus probably didn't get a whole lot that day at Nazareth when they took Him out after the service and tried to push Him over the cliff. But He went to church to *give*.

What did you *give* in church today?

by editors

Notes

Although we speak much today about the New Testament church, perhaps we can take the concept back to when He who **“Created the heaven and the earth”** (Genesis 1:1) created the first two people **“male and female”** (Genesis 1:27). I can imagine that as the Creator walked with Adam and Eve in Eden He taught them, and maybe even preached to them. And, possibly, if this church had remained in its purity, if sin would never have invaded God’s open-air assembly, **“this preaching would have been like a Bible for him [Adam] and for all of us; and we would have no need for paper, ink, pens, and that endless multitude of books which we require today.”**¹

Once this church left its original setting in the garden, however, and sin became a factor to be reckoned with, the church’s composition also changed. Rather than naturally encompassing all of humanity, the church became that community separate and distinct from the communities established by man. The church was now God’s instrument for calling humanity to reunite with its God.

Abraham, the man who **“believed God”** and whose belief was **“counted unto him for righteousness”** (Romans 4:3), is recognized as the one who rescued the early Old Testament community by answering the call from God to **“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee”** (Genesis 12:1).

The New Testament church was founded by Jesus Christ, Himself being its head and chief cornerstone (Eph. 5:23; 2:20). It is so closely identified with the Son of God that Paul calls it **“the body of Christ”** (e.g., I Cor. 12:27). The Greek word for *church* in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, that is, **“the called out ones,”** and it is indicative of its function in calling those of the world to unite with the people of God.

Skipping to the sixteenth century, we can examine the view held by Martin Luther that the **“evangelical church retains confession of the gospel, accepts the promises of God, and keeps the Word of Christ . . .”**² In addition to his view of the true church, Luther’s theology, along with other sixteenth century reformers, contained a view of a false church, which included the pope as **“antichrist and the loathsome beast (Rev. 13:1) which has blasphemous names on its forehead.”**³ Even with this ultimate denunciation, however, he wrote that the Roman church contained **“baptism, absolution, and the text of the gospel, and there are many godly people among them.”**⁴

Four centuries later, John Stott, speaking on the condition of the contemporary church, says, **“Hostile to the church, friendly to Jesus Christ.”** These words describe large numbers of people, especially young people today. They are opposed to anything which savours of institutionalism.⁵

This calls into question the relevancy of today’s church. What good does it do? What useful functions does it serve? Why do we have it? Do we need it?

Indeed, to be viable, today’s church must begin to face important issues, ones that even those hostile to institutionalism will be willing to become involved with. In an age of mass starvation and oppression, wars and the threat of nuclear suicide, what a challenge faces God’s holy church. The Christian community has indeed been sent out as **“sheep among wolves.”** But its Lord and head has promised, **“surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age”** (Matthew 10:16; 28:20; NIV).

D.R.S.

¹ *Luther’s Works*, Volume I, Concordia Publishing House, © 1958. Used by permission, p. 105.

² *Martin Luther’s Religious Thought* by M. M. Landeen, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing, 1971), p. 80.

³ *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 1, p. 115.

⁴ *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 5, p. 246.

⁵ Taken from *Basic Christianity* by John Stott. © InterVarsity Press of London; used by permission of InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515, p. 7.

selected by editors

The church is a Christian society formed for the members composing it, that each member may enjoy the assistance of all the graces and talents of the other members, and the working of God upon them, according to their several gifts and abilities. The church is united in the holy bonds of fellowship in order that each member may be benefited by the influence of the other. All are to bind themselves to the covenant of love and harmony. The Christian principles and graces of the whole society of believers are to gather strength and force in harmonious action. Each believer is to be benefited and improved by the refining and transforming influence of the varied capabilities of the other members, that the things lacking in one may be more abundantly displayed in another. All the members are to draw together, that the church may become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.

The covenant of agreement in church membership is that each member would walk in the footsteps of Christ, that all will take His yoke upon them, and learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart. Doing this, "Ye shall," saith the dear Saviour, "find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29, 30).

Those who wear Christ's yoke will draw together. They will cultivate sympathy and forbearance, and in holy emulation will strive to show to others the tender sympathy and love of which they feel such great need themselves. He who is weak and inexperienced, although he is weak, may be strengthened by the more hopeful and by those of mature experience. Although the least of all, he is a stone that must shine in the building. He is a vital member of the organized body, united in Christ, the living head, and through Christ identified with all the excellence of Christ's character so that the Saviour is not ashamed to call him brother.

Why are believers formed into a church? Because by this means Christ would increase their usefulness in the world and strengthen their personal influence for good. In the church there is to be maintained a discipline which guards the rights of all and increases the sense of mutual dependence. God never designed that one man's mind and judgment should be a controlling power. He never designed that one man should rule and plan and devise without the careful and prayerful consideration of the whole body, in order that all may move in a sound, thorough, harmonious manner.

Believers are to shine as lights in the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. A church, separate and distinct from the world, is in the estimation of heaven the greatest object in all the earth. The members are pledged to be separate from the world, consecrating their service to one Master, Jesus Christ. They are to reveal that they have chosen Christ as their leader. . . . The church is to be as God designed it should be, a representative of God's family in another world.

Taken from *Selected Messages* — vol. III, by Ellen G. White, pp. 15-17.

Key passage:
Matthew 5:14-16

Notes

He who is
weak may
find strength

The church:
"A representative
of God's
family in
another world"

by editors

Key passage:
Psalm 100:3

Notes

The church is a cross-cultural, international community to which every Christian is called to belong. By definition it may be said to be biblically based and oriented according to the life and teachings of Jesus, with some practice or organization appropriate to Christian doctrine, mission and heritage. And basically, that is about as precise a definition as one may give for the concept "church." For the definition must be broad enough to accommodate itself to all Christian communities, whether Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal or Adventist.

One may go beyond defining the church in terms of its most basic essence—its *esse*—however, and describe it in terms of its *bene esse*—i.e., what the church must do to fulfill its calling, its beneficial actions. Here, we can list nine descriptions.

1. The church is a community unique in that Christian principles and ideals can be explicitly appealed to.

2. Within the church there is a measure of mutual responsibility and caring which extends beyond personal friendships.

3. It is an institution to which many Christians look to help them transmit their values to the next generation.

4. Part of these values communicated contain the directive to be self-critical and even critical of our churches, as biblical authority transcends the authority of ourselves and the church.

5. The church is an organization that encourages personal responsibility, as opposed to adopting a totally deterministic outlook relative to behavior.

6. The church is instrumental in creating some recognition of the need of grace.

7. And likewise, it creates a sense of the reality of grace—e.g., words of forgiveness spoken, etc.

8. The church provides the context where mere information takes on some meaning. Some call this process "conscientization," or conscienceness-raising. In Christian terms, the word "conversion" would be proper here.

What is meant, is that it is most important for the church, not necessarily to provide simply more information, but to bring its members "different glasses" through which they may view themselves and this world (this may be done through travel, books, films, fundamentally through faith in Jesus Christ, etc.).

9. The church provides an alternative identification to ethnic and national identifications. As a Christian, one is a member primarily of an international community—a community which transcends geo/political barriers.

Thus, the church calls us to be more than we are—to act in a way appropriate for members of an eschatological community. As Christians, we are called to help form and be a part of a community of faith, hope, love and freedom. We are called to be a healing community, and to allow this community to shape our lives and those of our family members in suitable ways.¹

E.B.S.

¹ Most of this material has been gleaned from a series of lectures on the church given at the Southern California School of Theology at Claremont by Professor John B. Cobb, Jr.

by editors

Key passage:
Hebrews 13:1

Notes

“For ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (I Cor. 12:27). I am not going to attempt to do an exegesis on this text to determine exactly what Paul meant when he described the church as the “body of Christ.” I will say, however, that when I hear the church described in such terms, I can’t help but think that a close-knit, family-type fellowship is certainly suggested.

And a cursory glance at the history of the early church makes it clear that the early believers enjoyed at times this kind of real fellowship—one which even included communal living and the sharing of goods (Acts 2:45).

But where is this spirit to be found today? Not necessarily the communal living, but where is the spirit of true brotherhood and fellowship found? More importantly, where genuine fellowship among the members of the body is not found, how may it be generated?

Below are a few suggestions for those who are serious about establishing real fellowship with their fellow believers.

1. Be human. That is, accept the fact that you are a sinner; don’t try to delude yourself into thinking you are perfect—or are even close. For “when I am perfect,” quotes a well-known actress, “I cease to exist.”

Recognizing and accepting ourselves as sinful humans is important, for real fellowship cannot be built upon the facades of perfection. Fellowship consists in the interactions and relationships of genuine people, with their confessions and struggles and problems of every nature.

Christian fellowship is holy, not because of its participants, but only because of the all-powerful and all-covering grace of God.

2. Recognize your dependence upon others. John Donne said it best: “No man is an island, no man stands alone.” But it is our perennial nature to think of ourselves as nearly infinite, super-human individuals who “don’t need anybody.” If we are successful, then we have pulled ourselves up by our *own* bootstraps. And as for the poor and criminals, well, they could make it too if they would only make an honest try.

But man is not himself individually. He is defined as “human being” only as he is in community—only as he recognizes his dependence upon others. To withdraw from dependence upon one’s fellowmen is to deny one’s humanity. But to recognize our part in the great web of humanity is to affirm one’s nature, and prepare for genuine fellowship.

3. Communicate. That is, *speak* and *listen*. No human being is so degraded that he is not worthy to be spoken to; and there is no one so sinful or peculiar that he has nothing significant to say. To speak and to listen—this is a fundamental privilege that the Christian must grant to all with whom he intends to fellowship.

And yet, while many of us have no difficulty at all speaking, we find ourselves impatient or daydreaming or racing ahead in our minds when it comes to listening to what another has to say.

But if fellowship has one integral part, it is *communication*—a communication which recognizes the dignity and worthiness of every other human being, and manifests this recognition in speaking and listening.

E.B.S.

“When I
am perfect,
I cease
to exist”

“No man
is an
island . . .”
— John Donne

“Speak
and
listen”

by Frank Knittel

My thesis . . . is that each one of us must develop an attitude toward church debates of such a dimension that we can approach our students and convince them that differences of belief need not destroy us, and that unity of faith is really unity within the boundaries of faith. . . .

We sometimes overlook the fact that within the first few months of the Christian church, some 2,000 years ago, a crisis arose over ethnic questions. And this was no small dispute. Its resolution resulted in an entire reorganization of the church. . . .

But the church did survive, and do you want to know something? It was an entire church which changed its posture. Those early Christians did not allow historical positions or traditions to cloud *their eagerness* to get on with the *message of the free gift of salvation*. . . .

Since some individuals have obviously caused serious confusion among our church members with their positions . . . it seemed proper to remove them when their disruptive style became too abusive. Perhaps we should have left the matter there, rather than have gotten into theology. I earnestly believe that variations of theological positions are both tolerable and desirable as long as we understand that we are fallible, and that our individual beliefs are only that, and not necessarily eternal and complete truth.

My hunch is that if we were to ask thirty of our church theologians to develop a 50-page document specifying what each considered to be the definitive explanation of the sanctuary, we would get at least twenty variations, perhaps thirty. . . . One of the finest things we could do for our students is to persuade them that differences of opinion may be acceptable, perhaps even stimulating, certainly not always debilitating.

This brings me to my second position. We lead ourselves and others into real problems when we are too ready to take intransigent positions, solemnly claiming that our position is backed up by the Scriptures and the modern Spirit of Prophecy. Sad to say, we can back up almost anything we wish by extracting sentences, phrases, or even entire paragraphs from the writings of Ellen White. . . .

Arguments about the sanctuary in our church, for example, are as old as the church itself, and within these arguments are valid differences of opinion. A great deal of latitude can and should be allowed. . . .

This leads me to the third and final point. When our students come to us with questions about theological divisions within our church, let us not dismiss their inquiries as merely sophomoric or simply cynical or deliberately goading. Many times they are all of these, but even under those circumstances circumspect replies are not only a courtesy, but even more, a necessity. . . .

I am very deeply committed now to our church and love it very much. I am always pained when divisions break upon the scene and do my very best not to join these divisional elements even when facts sustain some allegations. . . . It is part of our duty to sustain before youth and age the concept that our church is of God. We already have sufficient revealed truth to carry us to the kingdom. The message of salvation is our responsibility to share; *that* is the pillar of our faith.

Taken from an excerpt of a talk given by Dr. Frank Knittel, president of Southern Missionary College, to faculty and staff, as recorded in *Columns*, pp. 5, 6.

Key passage:
Ephesians 4:3;
Colossians 3:14

Notes

Differences of belief do not constitute anarchy or disorder *per se*

"A great deal of latitude can and should be allowed"

"The message of salvation is our responsibility to share"

REACT

1. Re Frank Knittel's Opinion article, do you agree with his thesis that "differences of belief need not destroy us, and that unity of faith is really unity within the boundaries of faith"? Explain.

2. The Evidence article for this week states that "the church provides an alternative identification to ethnic and national identifications (see Gal. 3:28). Do you agree? If so, what do you see as the social/political benefits of this alternative identification?

This article also claims that "as a community of faith and hope, we are called to give a clear-headed witness to the world of appropriate new directions for society and life. . . . And . . . we should accept the risk of being pioneers and leaders in implementing these new directions." Do you agree? What are the implications? Explain.

3. What is the purpose of the modern-day church? List what you consider to be five of its most important functions.
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____

4. As the universal Christian community today is facing a large apostasy rate and an increasing number of unbelievers, as well as the prospects of global starvation, nuclear genocide and ecological collapse, is the church's major responsibility to be understood in terms of doctrine, "gospel" (as traditionally conceived), or social change?

The Bread And The Wine



"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

— I Corinthians 11:24; NIV

by Sheree Strom

The week I spent lying flat on my back in the hospital turned out to be one of the most humbling periods of my life. When an iron-willed, independent individual like myself suddenly finds herself unable to carry out even the most routine duties, life can be demoralizing.

The nurse's first order was that I should call her when I needed something. I was not to do anything for myself. As she left the room I chuckled at the absurdity of relying on her when I was capable of caring for myself. However, I soon learned that my independent spirit would not be enough to get me out of that hospital. The humiliating reality struck as I struggled to the bathroom on my own. Unfortunately, I ended up on the hard floor and reluctantly accepted the bedpan which the nurse generously offered to me. I began to realize that a quick recovery depended on my willingness to surrender my independence to the nurse's expertise.

Peter was another individual who preferred to rely on his own resources. When Christ knelt to wash his feet in the upper room, Peter protested vigorously. His refusal was not merely a statement of Christ's superiority to himself, but a denial of his need for Christ's cleansing righteousness. "In making this protest Peter was in fact displaying the pride of unredeemed men and women, who are so confident of their ability to save themselves that they instinctively resist the suggestion that they need divine cleansing. They desire to do everything for themselves."¹

Handing the steering wheel of one's life to someone else and allowing another to guide is never easy. But the communion service is Christ's reminder to humanity that this must be done—for we cannot make it on our own. By partaking of the sacraments and participating in the ordinance of humility, we Christians recognize anew two important dependencies: First, our dependency on Christ for our salvation. Not until we digest His broken body and spilled blood can we be saved. And as our feet are washed we are again reminded of the cleansing process of Christ's sacrifice.

But neither the partaking of bread and wine nor the foot-washing ceremony can take place without the assistance of our fellow believers. Here we see the second dependency of us Christians. By allowing other individuals to wash our feet and to serve us the bread and wine, we embrace the necessity and beauty of Christian fellowship. We must rely on our fellow Christians for comfort and assistance as we move together towards eternity.

Christ, in His omniscience, realized the human tendency for people to depend solely on themselves. But Christ's mandate to "do this in remembrance of me" is not a meaningless observance of ceremony but a constant reminder to us of our weakness and our need for and the availability of divine and human assistance.

¹ *The Gospel According to St. John*, Tyndale Bible Commentary by R. V. G. Tasker. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 49503. © 1980. Used by permission, p. 155.

by editors

Notes

Two holy ordinances: baptism and the communion service. These are symbols, sensible signs, instituted by Christ, in which the grace of God in Christ, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, are represented, sealed and applied to believers. These ordinances are earthly acts that lift the participants into heavenly associations and move them toward eternal life. Each reveals a major incident in the life of our Lord, and invites believers to share in that experience with a view to eventual union with the Master. Reverent observance of these two Christian rituals will help us regain our lost sense of awe and mystery, and will bring us closer to **“the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity”** (Isaiah 57:15).

Much more than just a formal reverence is needed, however, for one to realize the full meaning and character of the ordinances. Faith, for instance, is an essential element, for **“without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”** (Hebrews 11:6). Faith has been defined as many things: love, freedom and ultimate concern, to name a few. But however it is described, faith is that which reunites the separated—and establishes the connection between heaven and earth. Thus it is that the ordinances are relevant and meaningful only within the environment of faith.

Hence, in faith, **“John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”** (Mark 1:4; NIV). The Christian baptism is a basic confession of faith in the reconciliation that was worked out by God in Jesus Christ. It is an admittance of one’s alienation from God, and an act of thanksgiving for the gift of divine grace.

The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper is also an act of thanksgiving before God. For more than one thousand years before the time of Christ, God’s chosen people had been celebrating their deliverance from Egyptian slavery, and keeping the Passover as the Lord had commanded. Jesus Himself must have shared in thirty or more such anniversaries during His human lifetime. And as faithful Jews, He and His disciples prepared that fateful Thursday evening for what the Master alone knew would be His last Passover supper. Paul looks back from A.D. 57, to grant us a description of the actual communion supper. He writes in the setting of strife in Corinth, and appeals for unity and fellowship. He reminds us that Christ was calm against the background of His impending cruel death, and that **“on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”** (1 Cor. 11:23-26; NIV).

One partakes of the fellowship of the Lord’s Supper only when it is done in remembrance of Jesus Christ. As the Passover feast was eaten in recollection of the exodus and anticipation of the Messiah, so the communion supper is to be eaten in remembrance of both Calvary and Easter, and in anticipation of being with God.

D.R.S. / E.B.S.

by editors

Passover was drawing near once again, a time commemorating the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. As Jesus and the disciples gathered for this feast of remembrance Christ desired to be alone with His beloved friends for one last time.

"Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals. He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin-offering, and He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death. As He ate the Passover with His disciples, He instituted in its place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages. . . ."¹

In churches of every persuasion around the world worshipers celebrate Communion—the service instituted by Christ in Jerusalem the night before His death. After first washing the disciple's feet—an act of service—Jesus took and blessed bread and wine, making them symbols of His body and blood given for man's salvation.

"The ordinances that point to our Lord's humiliation and suffering are regarded too much as a form. They were instituted for a purpose. Our senses need to be quickened to lay hold of the mystery of godliness. It is the privilege of all to comprehend, far more than we do, the expiatory sufferings of Christ. . . ."

"Our Lord has said, 'Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. . . . For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.' This is true of our physical nature. To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life. The bread we eat is the purchase of His broken body. The water we drink is bought by His spilled blood. Never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf. It is reflected in every water-spring. All this Christ has taught in appointing the emblems of His great sacrifice. The light shining from that communion service in the upper chamber makes sacred the provisions for our daily life. The family board becomes as the table of the Lord, and every meal a sacrament.

"And how much more are Christ's words true of our spiritual nature. He declares, 'Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life.' It is by receiving the life for us poured out on Calvary's cross, that we can live the life of holiness. And this life we receive by receiving His word, by doing those things which He has commanded. Thus we become one with Him. 'He that eateth My flesh,' He says, 'and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me' As faith contemplates our Lord's great sacrifice, the soul assimilates the spiritual life of Christ. . . ."

"As we receive the bread and wine symbolizing Christ's broken body and spilled blood, we in imagination join in the scene of communion in the upper chamber. We seem to be passing through the garden consecrated by the agony of Him who bore the sins of the world. We witness the struggle by which our reconciliation with God was obtained. Christ is set forth crucified among us."²

Key passage:
John 6:53-57

Notes

"The ordinances are regarded too much as a form"

"To the death of Christ we owe even this earthly life"

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 652.

² *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 660-661.

by H. G. Haile

Editor's Note: One of the more interesting aspects of the history of the eucharist—or Lord's supper—involves the controversy between Zwingli and Luther over the interpretation of Christ's words, "This is my body." H. G. Haile offers us a perceptive look into this Reformation quarrel.

At issue with the powerful Protestant cities in southwest Germany was the nature of holy communion or, as they preferred to call it, the Lord's Supper. The enlightened Zwingli found something truly repulsive in the thought of eating Christ's body and drinking down his blood—cannibalism, he called it. Plainly, he said, Christ could not be in two places at one time, "at the right hand of the father" in heaven and in the bread and wine. These were merely tokens by which we "remember" our Lord. Such talk struck Luther as simply obtuse. Philip of Hesse, a prince who drew the political implications of the religious differences, called a conference in 1529 at Marburg, hoping the sides could agree. This was where Luther dramatically wrote down with chalk upon the table before him Christ's words, *hoc est corpus meum*, "This is my body," and ceremoniously laid a satin cloth over them. To Zwingli's exasperation, he punctuated later discussion by removing the cloth with a flourish, thus emphasizing how he clung to the text. When the two sides parted, neither willing to yield, Zwingli cried out in tears, "There are no people on earth with whom I would rather be at one than the Wittenbergers," but Luther affirmed "Ye have another spirit than ours."

Clearly, there was more at stake here than may meet a modern eye, accustomed to gazing confidently upon a tangible world. Both Luther and Zwingli accepted the palpability of material things, of course. But each peered on beyond such uncertain phenomena toward a surer reality in the spirit, and on past fleeting human life toward its source and larger frame, which their age took to be God. For Luther, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper were points where the mortal sphere does touch the divine, and opens to it. The ultimate ground of reality was at any time accessible to a Christian at the Lord's Supper. . . .

At issue was the very substance of the outer world. Luther held to the mainstream of Christian thinking since its early epochs, in his confidence that God was close by. Jesus Christ, as God-man, was the realization of the essential quality of Luther's universe. The Lord's Supper was, for him, the ever present vouchsafe of reality, where heaven and flesh are joined. . . .

Here the issue of the Lord's Supper brought Luther to express the unique sense of Christianity as he understood it. He denied he was merely puffing up the idea of humanity until it appeared to touch the divine, for God was not some object, he said, with known dimensions which could be approached in that way, "but an imponderable essence beyond nature, entirely contained within every granule at all times, yet also above and outside all creation." Such a concept of God was what the Lord's Supper meant—no: it was what the Lord's Supper is. . . . This had been Luther's attitude when he and Zwingli disagreed in 1529 at Marburg.

From the book, *Luther; An Experiment in Biography*, by H. G. Haile. Copyright © 1980 by Doubleday & Co., Inc., pp. 125-130.

Key passage:
Matthew 26:26-29

Notes

"Ye have
another spirit
than ours"

— Luther

by Laurey Bauer, et al.

Key passage:
Matthew 26:30

Notes

When I was a Catholic, communion was little more than a pretty, somewhat mysterious ritual that I partook in every week to "get on the better side of God." Today, however, as I commit my life to Christ on a daily basis, I can better understand God's real purpose for this ordinance as much more sensible and meaningful to everyday living. Communion is a time to remember what it means to be reconciled with God. And it is a time to renew our commitment to Him and to others.

Still, even as a Protestant, communion can sometimes lose its meaning amid the rigid formality and strict organization, and the atmosphere is sometimes heavy with depression and gloom. And what a tragedy. For the communion service, in remembrance of the Son of God, should be a time of great joy and happiness—an occasion to celebrate. So below I have listed some ideas for making the communion time more meaningful and enjoyable.

1. Devote some period of time before Communion Sabbath to fasting and prayer—avoiding, of course, making this a "works activity."

Fasting may sound like a strange way to celebrate. And if it seems this way to you, then don't do it. "Fasting," however, can mean anything from total abstinence to a significant decrease in consumption. The amount of food consumed is in itself unimportant. What is important is that the mind be clear to contemplate and to communicate effectively and joyfully with God and others.

2. Before the service begins, form a small group of those whom you are comfortable with for a spontaneous, family-like time of prayer, singing and sharing.

Here, the group should exert no pressure upon an individual to compel him or her, for example, to pray, or to give a testimony, etc. Rather, a very relaxed, comfortable, totally accepting attitude is what is needed on the part of the group members.

3. If your circumstances permit, you might want to begin the occasion with a fellowship dinner. Sometimes, an "agape feast" is served beforehand, consisting of fruits, breads, nuts, cheeses, etc. Be creative, and make this a time of real fellowship and communion, not only with God, but with one another as well.

4. Immediately before those in your group ready for departure, you might want to arrange a small, informal circle with everyone clasping hands, and dismiss with a simple song.

5. Most importantly, however, remember that communion is designed to be a time of joyous celebration. It is in commemoration of God's act of reconciling the world to Himself. It does indeed contain a note of tragedy, but the theme is God's amazing gift of salvation. So express your thanksgiving. Celebrate.

selected by Edward H. Pruden

In addition to the more obvious truths which are contained in the institutions of the Lord's Supper, there are a number of significant spiritual implications in the celebration of this memorial meal which the Christian should recognize. . . .

First of all there is the implication that every Christian needs the ministry of a quiet place. When the Lord came to the point in His ministry when he desired to inaugurate this meal which would serve as a memorial to him and a reminder of the spiritual implications of his death, he directed his disciples to an upper room, presumably a place of quiet detachment removed from the noise of the streets and the interruptions of the multitude. There is no doubt that this was an ideal setting for the institution of his memorial, but one suspects there is in the selection of that place at least a suggestion to the follower of Christ that to such a place every sincere soul should repair at frequent intervals.

Our Protestant Christianity has impressed the world with its boundless energy and its businesslike administration of its affairs. However, one wonders just how successful we have been in impressing upon the minds of people the necessity for meditation and prayer. While our ceaseless activity has unquestionably achieved a great deal, it is altogether possible that much more could have been done if such activity had been interspersed with a reasonable number of quiet periods in which the soul was brought face to face with God. . . .

A second implication in the memorial meal is the need for Christian fellowship. In that upper room in Jerusalem long ago there gathered a group of individuals who had come to mean a great deal to each other and who were destined to mean a great deal to the kingdom of God. With the exception of Judas Iscariot there had grown up between the disciples and their Leader a great bond of confidence and affection. Much of what they had already been able to achieve, and were later to accomplish, grew out of that fellowship which had come to mean so much in their own personal experience. Outside those four walls there prevailed many antagonizing forces and discordant voices, but within that little room there was, at least for a time, a harmony of spirit and a unity of purpose which must have been tremendously rewarding and encouraging. . . .

A third implication in the memorial meal is the Christian's world task. In partaking of the simple articles of food and drink which were a part of the everyday diets of all men, the disciples were reminded that the ideals and truths which Jesus shared with them were as needful to life at its best as food and drink are to bodily existence, and in turn were to be shared with all men. They had not been selected through any divine favoritism in order that they might personally enjoy a secret which was to be concealed from all the rest of humanity, but were rather the recipients of a message which in due season was to be published abroad. . . .

. . . Partaking of the memorial meal at regular intervals should remind us of the folly of spending so much of our time in activities which have to do with physical growth while neglecting so shamefully those experiences in life which enlarge the spirit and increase our capacity to serve Christ in an acceptable fashion.

Key passage:
I Corinthians 11:24

Notes

"The necessity for meditation and prayer"

"The need for Christian fellowship"

"The Christian's world task"

Gaston Foote, *Communion Meditations*, Pierce & Smith Pub., 1951, pp. 16-21.

REACT

1. How do you interpret Christ's words, "This is my body"? What is the significance of your interpretation?

2. The Evidence article for this week briefly discusses the theological conflict between Zwingli and Luther. It quotes Zwingli as crying out in tears, "There are no people on earth with whom I would rather be at one than the Wittenbergers," and Luther affirming, "Ye have another spirit than ours."

Do you find this division over the nature of the Lord's supper disheartening? Do you, from your limited perspective, believe it was necessary? Do you believe Zwingli and Luther had different "spirits," as Luther claimed, or can their differences in opinion best be explained in other, secular terms?

3. The Logos article states, "These ordinances [baptism and the Lord's Supper] are earthly acts that lift the participants into heavenly associations and move them towards eternal life." Do you agree? If so, then how does this work? What actually takes place?

4. Is the essence of the communion service entirely symbolic, or is grace mysteriously and supernaturally transmitted outside of the perceived symbolism?

5. Below, list three ways in which the Lord's Supper is significant to you.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The Christian's Witness



“Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”

— Mark 5:19; NIV

by J. B. Phillips

Part of the astonishing humility of the love of God lies, not only in His human level approach in coming down to where we are, but in His perfect readiness to use ordinary people like ourselves as channels and instruments in our day and generation in the vast sweep of His unchanging purpose. We may think it is a proper modesty on our part to assume that all work done in His Name must always be inferior in quality and effect to His own work done upon this earth. But I believe that by such thinking we are really belittling His amazing magnanimity and even cramping the operation of His Spirit, because we have not properly grasped the generosity of His purpose. . . .

The Cross of Christ is indeed the focal point, patent as historical fact, of the vast sweep of God's work of reconciliation, for in this central act the man with eyes to see can observe the devastating humility of God. Not only did God in the person of Christ make what C. S. Lewis calls "that tremendous dive" and become one of ourselves, but He accepted the unspeakable disgrace, the horror and the darkness, that lie behind the Cross of Calvary. Yet I must repeat that the reconciliation of the Cross is but the outcrop in human history of a vast, invisible, unforgettable purpose—the love of God—"personally reconciling the world unto Himself—not counting their sins against them" (2 Corinthians v. 19). Backwards in time from this unforgettable act, as well as forwards, the steady pressure of reconciliation is for ever at work. And we who are lovers and followers of Christ are

commissioned with the "message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians v. 19). Amazing as it seems, and amazing as indeed it is, we who are reconciled to God through Christ are now the living agents, the local representatives, of the celestial task of making men both reconciled and whole. "Just as the Father sent me," said Jesus to His early followers, "so I am now going to send you" (St. John xx.21). He makes no distinction. The reconciling, whole-making energy and purpose of love which was in Him is to be in us as well, for "We realise that our life in this world is actually His life lived in us" (1 John iv. 17).

It is both sensible and salutary to reflect on this high calling. So often we are bogged down by consideration of our own soul's welfare, or bedeviled by the thought of our own unworthiness, that we fail to see the greatness of our calling as sons of God and ministers of reconciliation. Fortunately for us we learn by doing, even by failing, so that we have not to wait until we have reached some fantastic height of spiritual fitness before God can use us. Provided that we have accepted His act of reconciliation, and have dropped our attempts to justify ourselves we are embarked, however imperfectly, upon the ministry of reconciliation, upon the task of making men whole. We can truthfully say, with bated breath if you like, that we are "cooperators with God Himself" (2 Corinthians vi. 1).

J. B. Phillips, *Making Men Whole*, Collins/Fontana Books, © 1952, pp. 64-72.

by editors

Notes

The Christian's commission is clear: **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always: yes, to the end of time"** (Matthew 28:18-20; *Jerusalem*). Centuries before through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord declared to Israel, **"Ye are my witnesses . . . and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he . . ."** (Isaiah 43:10).

Although all-wise and all-powerful, God faces a fundamental problem of communicating Himself to His creation: human language is totally inadequate to explain the divine. Because God is wholly different than we humans are, any description we formulate about Him hits far below the mark. We say that God is loving. But we know what love is only in human terms. Is God therefore loving in the same way we humans are? Never. He is much more than our conceptions of "loving" could ever convey. We say that He is wise. But we only know what wise means when we can say "this person—that we can see and talk with and know—is wise." But what does it mean for God to be "wise"? Indeed, our human categories of expression are inadequate. Some theologians, Karl Barth for example, have therefore come to the conclusion that whatever is said about God is blasphemous—for we humans will always inadequately describe Him.

Nevertheless, while religious language is inadequate, it can be *appropriate*. Although our words can never encompass all that God is, they can *point* to what He is—they can be the most adequate expression that can be uttered regarding Him.

Hence, **"Ye are my witnesses."** You are chosen to communicate God.

The story of Andrew, the first Christian missionary, gives us a perceptible illustration of what it means to fulfill our calling to communicate divinity: "The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ)" (John 1:41; NIV). God doesn't call His witnesses to attempt to make ultimate metaphysical pronouncements about Himself. Rather, we Christians are commissioned to testify to what we have found—to what our experience with God has been. Thus, **"Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph . . . Come and see'"** (John 1:45, 46; NIV).

This method of witnessing about God, simply confessing what one has found and inviting others to "come and see," is seen again in Mark's story of the madman and Jesus. After healing this deranged person, the man offered to disciple himself to the Master. But **"Jesus did not let him, but said, 'Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you'"** (Mark 5:19; NIV).

The apostle Paul, testifying of his experience, writes, **"Christ's love compels us"** (II Cor. 5:14; NIV). Only the language which springs from a relationship with the divine is appropriate for describing that divinity. The only witness which corresponds to the being of God is of the type of Andrew's, Philip's and the madman's—a witness which is compelled by experiencing the love of Christ.

D.R.S./E.B.S.

by Garth Thompson

Key passage:
Luke 8:38, 39

Notes

Because expression intensifies experience, the Lord has provided that believers in Him shall witness of their experience. Of course, He has committed Himself to providing light sufficient for salvation to *any* who are honestly seeking a knowledge of truth in order to follow it (John 7:17). But do eternal destinies of other souls, then, ever hinge upon whether or not I am faithful in my own Christian witness?

"The two restored demoniacs were the first missionaries whom Christ sent to preach the gospel in the region of Decapolis. For a few moments only, these men had been privileged to hear the teachings of Christ. Not one sermon from His lips had ever fallen upon their ears. They could not instruct the people as the disciples who had been daily with Christ were able to do. But they bore in their own persons the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. They could tell what they knew; what they themselves had seen, and heard, and felt of the power of Christ. . . . As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us. We can tell how we have tested His promise, and found the promise true. We can bear witness to what we have known of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing."¹

"Wherever there is an impulse of love and sympathy, wherever the heart reaches out to bless and uplift others, there is revealed the working of God's Holy Spirit. In the depths of Heathenism, men who have had no knowledge of the written law of God, who have never even heard the name of Christ, have been kind to His servants, protecting them at the risk of their own lives. Their acts show the working of a divine power. The Holy Spirit has implanted the grace of Christ in the heart of the savage, quickening his sympathies contrary to his nature, contrary to his education. The 'Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1:9), is shining in his soul; and this light, if heeded, will guide his feet to the kingdom of God."²

"There are many who hide their soul hunger. These would be greatly helped by a tender word or a kind remembrance. There are others who are in the greatest need, yet they know it not. . . . Multitudes are so sunken in sin that they have lost the sense of eternal realities, lost the similitude of God, and they hardly know whether they have souls to be saved or not. They have neither faith in God nor confidence in man. Many of these can be reached only through acts of disinterested kindness. Their physical wants must first be cared for. They must be fed, cleansed, and decently clothed. As they see the evidence of your unselfish love, it will be easier for them to believe in the love of Christ."³

"Satan uses the listless, sleepy indolence of professed Christians to strengthen his forces and win souls to his side. Many who think that though they are doing no actual work for Christ, they are yet on His side, are enabling the enemy to preoccupy ground and gain advantages. By their failure to be diligent workers for the Master, by leaving duties undone and words unspoken, they have allowed Satan to gain control of souls who might have been won for Christ."⁴

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 340.² *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 385.³ *Ibid.*, p. 387.⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

"They could tell what . . . they themselves had seen, and heard, and felt"

"The Holy Spirit has implanted the grace of Christ in the heart of the savage"

by editors

Key passage:
I John 4:7-21

Notes

If I thought that people would be eternally saved or lost according to my witness alone, I doubt if I could sleep very well at night. I imagine that my inner self would be in constant turmoil—suspended in anxiety—over the need to witness to everyone in every place, in the perfect way.

I can imagine myself rudely interrupting a pleasant conversation to tell my friends of their probable eternal destiny, and what they must do to change their course.

I can imagine using dishonest and inappropriate means to accomplish my evangelistic goals—as the end I would be striving for would certainly justify any necessary means.

I can imagine myself simplifying my truth to a point where it could be easily learned and understood—and ignoring critical scholarship that sought to show me that life in general, and especially theology, is very complicated, and that simplistic answers do not address the real problems.

But alas, I do not believe that my witness can potentially be the sole determining point in another's salvation. And so I am spared one potential cause of a nervous breakdown.

One might reasonably ask me, however, what therefore is my motivation for witnessing? If another's salvation is determined independent of my testimony, then why should I bear that testimony at all?

Juan Luis Segundo in his book, *The Community Called Church*, addresses this question. His conclusion is that Christians are called to witness to the "world" for primarily two reasons:

1. To let non-Christians know of God's love for them and for the entire world. Christians are those who *know* of the love of God. The rest of the world's inhabitants are ignorant of this fact. They do not realize that it is only because of the grace and love of God that the world and all that is in it exists and flourishes. They do not recognize the power of God at work in love and understanding, goodness and kindness. So it is the Christian's responsibility to let it be known that "God so loved the world," and that He "was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (John 3:16; II Cor. 5:19; NIV).

2. Secondly, Segundo points out that Christians are called to witness to the world because only they can logically take the risks this implies. Here, witnessing may better be defined as *active loving*. Thus, Christians are those who can love others because they can believe in love and know that it is not displaced.

Segundo explains: "To love means to lose our autonomy and to become dependent on another. And this dependence may end up one day as disillusionment and heartbreak, leaving us empty inside. All love is a gamble, wherein we risk the best and deepest part of ourself."

"There are no guarantees in this world to cover the gamble."

"The point is that we [Christians] know that this trust is well placed . . . i.e., that there is Someone who has responded with a yes and that this gesture, is not lost in a void. We are those 'who have believed in love,' as Saint John says, because we know the name of him who is the origin and object of all love."¹

E.B.S.

"All love is a gamble, wherein we risk the best and deepest part of ourself"

¹ Juan Luis Segundo, *The Community Called Church*, Vol. 1, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 10545. © 1973. Used by permission, p. 57.

selected by Garth Thompson

Key passage:
John 4:1-26

Notes

From our Lord's interview with the Samaritan woman at the well near Sychar (John 4:1-26), Paul Little, staff evangelist with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship from 1950 until his death in 1975, has drawn seven basic principles of effective evangelism. Selected excerpts from each principle follow:

1. Contact Others Socially. We must have social contact with non-Christians. Yet it is being ignored in many Christian circles. This simple fact explains a lot of the apparent powerlessness of the gospel in today's world. Both in our Christian groups (churches and otherwise) and as individuals, we often see no one come to Jesus Christ because no non-Christians are listening to our message. . . . As simple Simon trying to catch fish with his line in a barrel is a pathetic figure. . . . We must go where they [unbelievers] are if we are to gain any significant audience for the gospel.

2. Establish a Common Interest. We like to skip the 'non-essentials' and get right to the point. . . . If I'd been our Lord, I'd probably have blurted out immediately, Lady, do you know who I am? [Jesus, however,] . . . began by referring to something in which she was obviously interested. (She'd come to draw water.) Gradually He directed the conversation away from this known interest to a spiritual reality she knew nothing about.

3. Arouse Interest. It is fascinating to see this woman's curiosity kindled and beginning to burn as our Lord draws her along. First, He came to her where she was. Second He showed an interest in her concerns. . . . As a man He speaks to her, a woman. As a Rabbi He speaks to her, an immoral woman. As a Jew He speaks to her, a Samaritan. Thus He startles her . . . she can sense the deeper dimension in His life by His refusal to discriminate against her. He is accepting her.

4. Don't Go Too Far. Despite her obvious interest and curiosity, Jesus didn't give her the whole story at once. Gradually, as she was ready for more, He revealed more about Himself. Then, when her curiosity had reached fever pitch (verse twenty-six) He identified Himself as the Christ.

5. Don't Condemn. Our Lord did not condemn the woman. As she answered Him about her husband, her sin itself condemned her. . . . Often we have the mistaken idea that if we do not condemn a certain attitude or deed, we will be condoning it. But this was not our Lord's opinion.

6. Stick With the Main Issue. Our Lord did not allow any secondary questions to sidetrack Him from the main issue. The woman asked where she should worship, on Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem, but Jesus steered the discussion back to Himself by shifting the emphasis from where to how one worships. Though hers was probably a legitimate question (her attitude was similar to the current honest question that many people have, Which church should I join?), our Lord refused to go off on a tangent; He left no doubt about the main issue: Himself.

7. Confront Him Directly. And finally, in declaring that He was the Messiah, our Lord reached the crucial point of the gospel. Likewise, whether we spend one or many sessions building a bridge of friendship between us, we must eventually cross this bridge and bring the non-Christian into a direct confrontation with the Lord Jesus so that he realizes his personal responsibility to decide *for or against* — Him.

Taken from *How to Give Away Your Faith* by Paul E. Little. © 1966 by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship used by permission of InterVarsity Press, pp. 27, 31-32, 34, 44.

by Garth Thompson

Key passage:
Acts 26:16-18

Notes

“Christian witnessing” has rather commonly come to suggest anything involved with evangelism or spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Witnessing is often equated with “making disciples of all the nations.” (Matthew 28:19; NASB).

It might help in a variety of ways, however, if we would distinguish “witnessing” from other somewhat parallel concepts. “To witness,” of course, suggests two things: 1) to see, hear, or otherwise experience some sort of event; and 2) to declare what we have personally seen, heard, etc. John spoke of both ideas: “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, . . . we proclaim to you also” (1 John 1:1, 3; NASB). To declare what *another* has seen or heard is not properly included in “witnessing” —even if that other is a John or a Matthew or a Paul.

Thus, for me to proclaim the gospel story, including all that Jesus did at the cross, is not really witnessing. Nor is it proclaiming the message of the return of Jesus. On the other hand, telling what believing in the cross or the second coming has meant to my life, what it has given me in terms of hope and peace—this is true witnessing.

Of course, ministering to the physical or emotional distress of another is not “witnessing” except as it reflects or is prompted by something I have personally experienced of the Lord’s workings within me. Nevertheless, such ministry might certainly be effective in “ministering reconciliation.”

We could well recognize that “witnessing” is one—maybe even the most effective—among a number of ways to spread the gospel and make disciples among the nations. This is true, however, only when the motivation and urgency for witnessing centers primarily on *Jesus* —i.e., standing up for Him.

In contrast to such a focus on Jesus, though, much of the urgency for proclaiming the gospel may well lie in concern for *the lost*. God’s gracious involvement in working for the salvation of the “unsaved” seems beyond question. His readiness to get “light” to the honest in heart—with or without human instrumentalities—seems established. But the witnessing disciple-maker has a unique effectiveness with those who may not already be “honest in heart.” The human touch has an efficiency to open eyes blinded by resistance to the Holy Spirit that divine agencies alone cannot effect. (We remember that Paul was appointed a *witness* to open *blinded* eyes, Acts 26:16-18.) Thus, even with God’s great love for the sinner, souls who might be saved with our witness may indeed perish for want of it.

1. The opening verse for this week's lesson reads, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19; NIV). How can you make this divine directive applicable to your own situation?
2. Do you agree with the Logos article that "Because God is wholly different than we humans are, any description we formulate about Him hits far below the mark"? Do you agree that "whatever is said about God is blasphemous"?
3. Garth Thompson writes in his introduction to the Testimony article that God "has committed Himself to providing light sufficient for salvation to *any* who are honestly seeking a knowledge of truth in order to follow it (John 7:17).

What, therefore, is the purpose of the Christian's witness? Can one's witness be the determining point in another's salvation? If so, then how does this affect your understanding of God's justice? If not, then why has the Christian been called to testify "how much the Lord has done"?

4. Paul Little, in this week's How To article, writes that Christians should contact others socially as the first preparatory step for witnessing about Jesus Christ. And, no doubt, a good relationship should be established between the one witnessing and the one who is being witnessed to. Nevertheless, do you believe it to be inconsiderate and/or dishonest to form relationships with others for the express and sole purpose of developing them into better "candidates" for your testimony? Is it right for friendships to be formed and used as means to ends? Even Christian ends? Or should our social relationships be based on the value of the human being alone?

Growing In Grace

LESSON 13
December 20-26



"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever!"

— II Peter 3:18; NIV

by Lilya Wagner

Some time ago we acquired another dog. She wandered away from her mother and six littermates and ambled cheerily over to us. Then she stood still and stared. A round little stomach perched on four unsteady legs. Floppy ears framed a pleasing expression. We took her, and accepted her as she was, knowing that much training and care lay ahead of us before she would be the dog we envisioned.

As she grew older, a fun-loving, mischievous nature supplemented her happy disposition. We realized her intelligence, and that she could learn quickly. So "come" became the first lesson on the agenda. The books said to put her on a long rope, let her wander, and then on the command "come," gently yank her toward us. Keppy learned quickly—not only that when the rope yanked she should hasten toward us, but also that when the rope no longer bound her, we appeared powerless to accomplish the "come" act together. She had not yet developed the love and loyalty to us that would cause her to submit to our wishes. The open pasture next door beckoned with more appeal.

Finally we decided dog obedience school would be a good experience—for both us and her. The first session remains permanently marked in our memory. She dragged me around (she had developed into a large, strong dog—the little white paws had proved deceptive) while her inquisitive nose investigated neighboring dogs properly walking in a line. Her behavior around their respective owners seemed incorrigible. But we loved Keppy; sometimes she and the obedience school experience strained our patience, but our love for her did not change.

Daily we practiced what we learned in the weekly lessons, and it didn't take long before Keppy realized what we expected of her. At times she rebelled and the instructor prescribed stern measures. But as we worked

together, she became more serious and her loyalties increased.

Graduation day came. The instructor requested Keppy and me to perform our "solo" act in front of two dozen dogs and people. By now Keppy felt a kinship. She watched me closely, concentrated as much as possible, and performed quite passably. After we returned to the sidelines, she jumped up and wished for my approval and love.

Our joint performance must have gone well enough, because we, along with about four other pairs, returned to the floor for another round. The winner of that one would be the runner-up! This time the test proved a little harder. Keppy had to sit, lie down, and stay while I walked out of the room. As I peeked around the corner, I saw her pained look as she struggled with her inward impulses. Finally she got up very slowly and sneaked over to sniff at her neighbor. We didn't even get honorable mention!

But more important than that, Keppy had developed a loyalty and a desire to please, and had increased her capacity to obey and perform. She still makes mistakes, but she has submitted to my will for her. I love her through those mistakes, because I value her loyalty and friendship.

Some time ago, God accepted me—adopted me. But like Keppy the pup, I had much to learn and grow. Gradually God helped me form a character more pleasing to Him, and I began to understand and appreciate His plan for me. I studied His words to me, and as I shared time with Him, we began to communicate. My mistakes did not change God's love for me. But unlike Keppy, whose character and habits have stabilized, I need to make true sanctification a daily work, one that will continue a lifetime. God is with me through this process; I am loyal and grateful.

by editors

Notes

We read in Matthew that the Christian's activities and lifestyle are of ultimate importance. He writes of feeding the hungry, aiding strangers, clothing the unclothed and pleading for the imprisoned as the criteria for judgment—for these were the works of the Christian's Model.

Thus true Christianity can be understood as being simply a matter of Christlikeness. For Christ is the pattern after which we have been called to develop. Charles Trumbull addressed this idea when he said, "There is only one life that wins, and that is the life of Jesus Christ. Every man may have that life; every man may live that life."¹ Peter also speaks in much the same way, bidding Christians to "**Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**" (II Peter 3:18).

Paul, too, concerned about the sanctification of believers, urged his readers to clothe themselves "**with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience**" and to "**be tolerant with one another and forgive one another**" (Col. 3:12, 13; GNB).

Jesus, however, during His ministry upon this earth, desired that no one be deceived about the cost of such spiritual growth. He therefore made it clear that "**If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me**" (Matthew 16:24). The way of the Christian's Lord is the way of denial—not as a punishing exercise for gathering merit, but as an imitation of the one who, "**though he was rich, . . . became poor**" (II Cor. 8:9).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, developed further this idea when he wrote, "In the gospels the very first step a man must take is an act which radically affects his whole existence."² He adds, "A righteous or unrighteous man, . . . when in the fullness of tasks, questions, success or ill-hap, experiences and perplexities, . . . throws himself into the arms of God . . . [and] then wakes with Christ in Gethsemane. . . . becomes a man and a Christian."³ The first step toward Christlikeness, then, is a step which demands one's all—one's whole self. It is a life-costing, life changing step. Explaining, Bonhoeffer continues, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow him, or it may be a death like Luther's, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world."⁴

"Come and die" is not a command only to put Christ above one's girlfriend or wife, one's schoolwork, occupation or needs, but a command to put Christ above *everything*. Christianity is a religion that costs one his life.

Using the term "cheap grace" to describe the belief of those who would have salvation and Christian growth without accepting their cost, Bonhoeffer states, "As Christianity spread, and the church became more secularized, this realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded . . . grace . . . was to be had at low cost."⁵ "Thus, "cheap grace is [now] the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace."⁶

The man who is serious about God and His commands, however, can identify with the promise of Jesus, "**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled**" (Matthew 5:6). And those who take part in this act of faith, await also the comforting words of John, "**These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life**" (I John 5:13, italics supplied).

D.R.S.

¹ Matilda E. Andros, *Alone With God*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1961), p. 7.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (© SCM Press Ltd. 1959), Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., p. 70.

³ Bonhoeffer, p. 24.

⁴ Bonhoeffer, p. 99.

⁵ Bonhoeffer, p. 49.

⁶ Bonhoeffer, p. 45.

selected by editors

"The work of Christ on earth was hastening to a close. Before Him, in vivid outline, lay the scenes whither His feet were tending. Even before He took humanity upon Him, He saw the whole length of the path He must travel in order to save that which was lost. Every pang that rent His heart, every insult that was heaped upon His head, every privation that He was called to endure, was open to His view before He laid aside His crown and royal robe, and stepped down from the throne, to clothe His divinity with humanity. . . .

"Ever before Him He saw the result of His mission. His earthly life, so full of toil and self-sacrifice, was cheered by the prospect that He would not have all this travail for naught. By giving His life for the life of men, He would win back the world to its loyalty to God. Although the baptism of blood must first be received; although the sins of the world were to weigh upon His innocent soul; although the shadow of an unspeakable woe was upon Him; yet for the joy that was set before Him, He chose to endure the cross, and the despised shame."¹

Thus, for nearly two thousand years, the cross has represented to those of the Christian faith the self-sacrificing love of our Savior. With this symbol, the Lord endeavored to illustrate to His disciples what living the Christian life should mean.

"Calling about Him, with the disciples, the people who had been lingering near, He said, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' The cross was associated with the power of Rome. It was the instrument of the most cruel and humiliating form of death. The lowest criminals were required to bear the cross to the place of execution; and often as it was about to be laid upon their shoulders, they resisted with desperate violence, until they were overpowered, and the instrument of torture was bound upon them. But Jesus bade His followers take up the cross and bear it after Him. To the disciples His words, though dimly comprehended, pointed to their submission to the most bitter humiliation, —submission even unto death for the sake of Christ. No more complete self-surrender could the Saviour's words have pictured. But all this He had accepted for them. Jesus did not count heaven a place to be desired while we are lost. He left the heavenly courts for a life of reproach and insult, and a death of shame. He who was rich in heaven's priceless treasure, became poor, that through His poverty we might be rich. We are to follow in the path He trod.

"Love for souls for whom Christ died means crucifixion of self. He who is a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost. The Christian is ever to realize that he has consecrated himself to God, and that in character he is to reveal Christ to the world. The self-sacrifice, the sympathy, the love, manifested in the life of Christ, are to reappear in the life of the worker for God."²

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 410.

² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 416, 417.

Key passage:
Psalm 40:7, 8

Notes

**The cross:
"No more
complete
self-surrender
could the
Saviour's
words have
pictured"**

by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Key passage:
Revelation 21:16

Notes

Any complete life has . . . three dimensions . . . —length, breadth, and height. The length of life is the inward drive to achieve one's personal ends and ambitions, and inward concern for one's own welfare and achievements. The breadth of life is the outward concern for the welfare of others. The height of life is the upward reach for God. Life at its best is a coherent triangle. At one angle is the individual person. At the other angle are other persons. At the tiptop is the Infinite Person, God. Without the due development of each part of the triangle, no life can be complete.

Let us turn, first, to the length of life or the individual's concern about developing his inner powers. In a sense this is the selfish dimension of life. There is such a thing as rational and healthy self-interest. The late Rabbi Joshua Liebman pointed out in an interesting chapter in his book *Peace of Mind* that we must love ourselves properly before we can adequately love others. Many people are plunged into the abyss of emotional fatalism because they do not love themselves in a wholesome way.

Every person must have a concern for self and feel a responsibility to discover his mission in life. God has given each normal person a capacity to achieve some end. True, some are endowed with more talent than others, but God has left none of us talentless. . . .

If life is to be complete, it must include not only the dimension of length but also of breadth by which the individual concerns himself in the welfare of others. No man has learned to live until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity. Length without breadth is like a self-contained tributary having no outward flow to the ocean. . . .

God has so structured this universe that things do not quite work out rightly if men are not diligent in their cultivation of the dimension of breadth. "I" cannot reach fulfillment without "thou." The self cannot be self without other selves. . . .

One more dimension of the complete life remains, namely, the height of that upward reach toward something distinctly greater than humanity. We must rise above earth and give our ultimate allegiance to that eternal Being who is the source and ground of all reality. When we add height to length and breadth, we have the complete life. . . .

If you do not have a deep and patient faith in God, you will be powerless to face the delays, disappointments, and vicissitudes that inevitably come. Without God, all of our efforts turn to ashes and our sunrises into darkest nights. Without him, life is a meaningless drama in which the decisive scenes are missing. But with him, we are able to rise from tension-packed valleys to the sublime heights of inner peace, and find radiant stars of hope against the nocturnal bosom of life's most depressing nights. . . .

What then is the conclusion of the matter? Love yourself, if that means rational and healthy self-interest. You are commanded to do that. That is the length of life. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. You are commanded to do that. That is the breadth of life. But never forget that there is a first and even greater commandment: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This is the height of life. Only by a painstaking development of all three of these dimensions can you expect to live a complete life.

From "Three Dimensions of a Complete Life," Martin Luther King, Jr., pp. 68-77. Reprinted by permission of Joan Daves. Copyright © 1963 by Martin Luther King, Jr.

"No man has learned to live until he can rise above . . . individualistic concerns"

by Ken Downing

 Key passage:
 John 8:32

Notes

It was a modest proposal. The editor wanted me to write an article on "How to Live the Christian Life"—in 500 words or less. Twenty-seven books in the New Testament, thousands of pages from Ellen White, multiple millions of words from Augustine to Uncle Arthur and beyond have tried to convey what it means to be a Christian and how to grow in God's grace. But I had 500 words—"two pages, double-spaced (elite type)"!

This quarter we have studied some of the doctrines of the church. So let us assume that your study of these doctrines has brought you into a closer, growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Let us also assume that the "pat answers" for Christian growth—Bible study, prayer, witnessing, etc.—are in fact valid and working for you, but that, as in times past, growth could stop. But how might this happen? Let us look at three ways you as a Seventh-day Adventist may be especially prone to unintentionally hinder your growing Christian experience.

1. By building a set of rigid, moral imperatives. To do this, you should search the Bible and devour the Spirit of Prophecy in order to establish static rules to govern your life. Create an inner "Good Deeds Club" which continually evaluates your spiritual performance from one day to the next. Latch on to available Bible teachers, ministers, friends, or anyone else who is willing to tell you how to live your life—and the more specific they are, the better.

Make sure you study the Bible for a rigidly set amount of time each day, observing all traditions and rituals perfectly, and then continually question in what areas you have failed. Make sure no one suspects that you are anything less than a model Seventh-day Adventist who has overcome all your problems. And above all, be sure to ignore the nagging feeling that you are slowly turning into a paranoid, spiritual basket case.

2. By being timid about living the Christian life. Equate Christianity with timidity, and therefore look at bold Christians who are sometimes mistaken in their views and actions as arrogant and presumptuous. Remember that the worst thing that can happen is for you to do something wrong. This means that you must straddle the fence on every issue that has any controversy, in or out of the church. Put off making decisions of any kind as long as possible, and if the decision is then made by default and turns out to be wrong, well you can rest in the assurance that you did the best you could. But primarily, you should be sure to ignore the uncomfortable feeling that you are turning into a spiritual sponge.

3. By being afraid of "new light." People who are too open are usually gullible and will chase any new spiritual idea. So you should confine your reading to church publications alone, and look to those who have "more training" than yourself to decide for you what is right and wrong. Stay away from people who have some light but obviously not all of it—people like C. S. Lewis, Karl Barth and Bill Gothard—and never presume to think that God would show you personally any light apart from what you have heard in school or in church. Keep in mind that growth is never spontaneous, that serendipity has no place in the Adventist Christian's life, and that new discoveries only come after you have done everything you could possibly do to please God. But ultimately, you should try to ignore the despairing feeling that you are slowly, painfully, frustratingly, self-destructing spiritually. . . . And how tragic—after trying so hard.

by Karl-Heinz Schroeder

This last quarter Christian doctrines have been the center of our discussion. These doctrines are guideposts that can help us on our way to the kingdom of God. But we need to keep in mind that these truths are seen through a glass darkly (I Cor. 13:12), and are therefore somewhat distorted. If there is an area where Christianity in general has failed it is in the field of dogmatic theology. In a legitimate quest to guard and protect the purity of the church's teaching, graven images of orthodoxy were fashioned before which generations of God's children were sacrificed. The danger of a creedal system was recognized by the founders of our denomination and rejected. This is not to denigrate the importance of church doctrines which are the result of honest quest. But the emphasis should be placed on further study and research into God's word and not on static doctrines. God made us curious and He wants us to search deeper. Since we are sinful beings there are limitations inherent in our nature that will prevent us from ever comprehending the truth completely. A careful reading of Church history in general and of SDA history in particular shows us how God has led His people in the ongoing development of new light. Perceptions of truth change from generation to generation.

One of the most vital questions that the Christian has to ask himself is, How do doctrines affect one's life. This is especially important since so many Christians over the centuries to the present have either lost their lives or were made very unhappy over the issue of correct theological thinking.

If I read the Holy Scriptures correctly it seems to me that God is much more concerned about people's behavior than about their differences in theological interpretations. It is the fruits that concern the Judge of the universe (Matthew 3:10). The Old and New Testaments alike emphasize this fact (see Genesis 6:5, 11, 13; 18:20; Jonah 1:2; Acts 10:38; Gal. 6:1-10; James 1:27). Doctrinal orthodoxy doesn't guarantee a life of quality—a life of good fruits. The scribes and Pharisees had the truth, at least as much as the disciples; they believed in the resurrection, in angels, the soon coming of the Messiah, Sabbath observance, etc. But many of them lacked an essential ingredient—there were no good fruits. They had it all in their brains but it had not transformed their hearts. Where Jesus went out of His way to seek out the hopeless, the sinners, the poor, many of the Pharisees prided themselves for their purity of doctrines and life; they had the light which kept them from sinful contamination. And thus Jesus said that they damned themselves—whitewashed sepulchres.

I remember quite well an incident of a few years back which may help to illustrate the concern I am trying to express. There was a teen-age convert with whom I became acquainted. One afternoon while we were talking he startled me. "You know," he said, "we as SDAs have the Truth, but my former church had much more selfless love." Paul said that the greatest of all the gifts of the Spirit is not greater insight into God's Word, but love. Jesus said that the world will know that we are His disciples when we have love for one another and for our enemies. The faithful and true Witness is telling the church in Laodicea: "I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot" (Rev. 3:15). Is it possible that we have contracted the Pharisaic infection of spiritual haughtiness with all the answers for all doctrinal problems? In our attempts to understand God's truth for our day and to guard it let us always keep in mind the apostle Paul's words in I Corinthians 13.

Key passage:
I Corinthians 13

Notes

"Graven images of orthodoxy were fashioned before which generations of God's children were sacrificed"

1. Lilya Wagner writes in this week's Introduction that the newly acquired Keppy was "perched on four unsteady legs," all alone, separated from her mother and litter-mates. Have you ever found yourself separated and alone, seemingly perched on unsteady legs before God, trying to live a Christian life? What were your frustrations? Where did you find help and encouragement?
2. Do you agree with this week's Logos article that "true Christianity can be understood as simply a matter of Christlikeness"? Is it possible to make something as complex as Christianity so simple as this definition?

How is Christlikeness obtained?

3. In this week's Logos article, Jesus is quoted as saying, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Dietrich Bonhoeffer comments: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." How do these two statements fit with Jesus' words, "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28, 30)?
4. Martin Luther King, Jr. writes in this week's Evidence article that one "will be powerless to face the delays, disappointments, and vicissitudes that inevitably come" without a deep and patient faith in God. Do you agree? Do you think you could convince a non-Christian friend of this fact?
5. Have you ever been a member of the "Good Deeds Club" Ken Downing mentions in the How To article? Did you enjoy it? What was it like?

Why does the author infer that specificity and rigidity in devising rules for one's life is foolish? Do you agree?

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Finland	4,743,160	54	5,921	4,744
*Iceland	220,918	7	540	407
Netherlands	14,000,000	47	3,893	3,049
Polish	35,000,000	121	4,084	4,676
Swedish	8,433,000	56	3,655	4,241
West Nordic	9,253,429	128	9,181	7,815
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