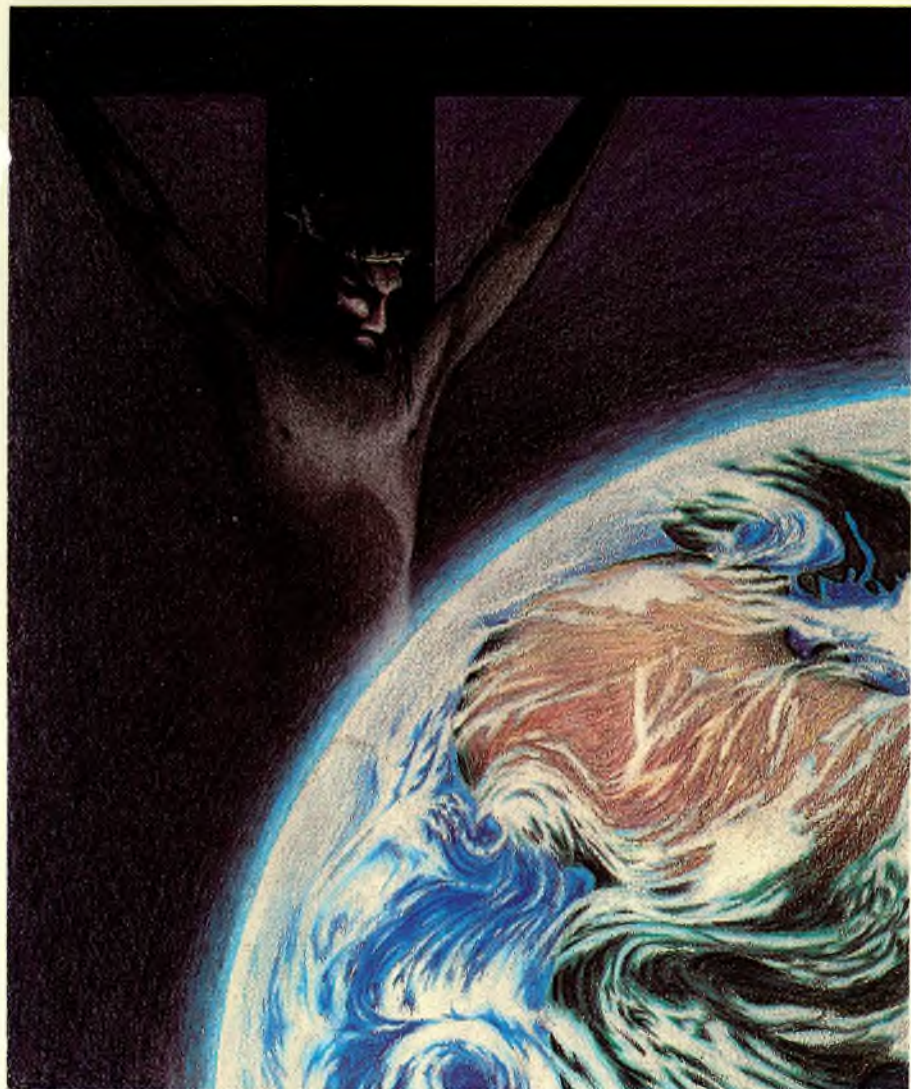


COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

A North American Church Ministries Publication

July-September 1986

Light of the World



Linda Hernandez babies her patients.

Meet Linda Hernandez,
registered pediatric nurse,
storyteller and part-time big
sister at Porter Memorial
Hospital in Denver.

"I think the Adventist
philosophy of healing really comes
to life in the pediatric department.

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need more than medicine to get
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sometimes the best medication we
can administer.

The joy of seeing a really sick
child get better is my reward for
working here, and I know my
colleagues feel the same. Together,
we're living Christ's words, 'If you
have done it unto one of the least
of these, you have done it unto
Me.'"



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And it escapes real definition except to say you know it when
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Christian physicians giving of themselves, day and night,
to mend broken bodies. Broken hearts. Broken spirits.



FLORIDA HOSPITAL
Orlando, Florida



J. N. Andrews,
pioneer
missionary

Abram La Rue,
pioneer to
Hong Kong



W. C. Grainger,
pioneer
to Japan

D. A. Robinson,
pioneer to
South Africa
and India



Stop Puzzling

Andrews, La Rue, Grainger, Robinson, Stahl, Hare, the Halliwells, Miller—what excitement these names carry in Adventist circles! Adventist mission history echoes with the names of hundreds of pioneers—men and women who dared and did for the Lord.

And as their exploits filtered back to what was once the home bases for Adventist missions, purse strings were loosed. Mission giving peaked in the 1950's with mission funds accounting for more than twenty percent of total tithes and offerings. Sadly, however, mission funds in 1984 accounted for less than five percent of total S.D.A. giving. Our mission pioneers who gave their all would have a hard time understanding these statistics.

Today the glamour seems to have worn thin. But in reality the mission outreach of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has become wildly successful—perhaps too successful for its own good, when we consider the current state of (or lack of) support. More than one million members in Africa, another million in Inter-America, and nearly another million in South America attest to the continued success of our mission programs.

True, the pioneers for the most part would have a difficult time recognizing the kind of mission outreach that warms the hearts of those who visit the world field today. Radio, television, stop-smoking programs, English and other language schools touch people where they live, work, and play.

Actually our mission challenge is greater and there are more opportunities than ever before. True, the day of the pioneer missionaries has for the most part slipped into history, although a few hardy and courageous people still meet what need there is for pioneers.

An opportunity for expanded giving—



F. A. Stahl,
pioneer
in the Andes

Eric B. Hare,
pioneer
among the Karens
in Burma



The Leo B. Halliwells,
pioneers
on the Amazon

H. W. Miller,
China doctor



The Pioneers

But when we think of missions today we think of teams, and many such teams include volunteers—student missionaries, Adventist Volunteer Service Corps, S.O.S. (retired workers), and hundreds of local lay workers. The number of volunteer workers is increasing year by year.

Whereas the traditional missionary home bases—Australia, Europe, New Zealand, and North America—still send a large share of missionaries outside their borders, most of the other divisions now contribute workers as well.

In the light of this world-wide contribution, are mission offerings still essential? If you could see the thousands upon thousands of children in Africa attending Sabbath School who do not receive lesson papers, or their Sabbath Schools being conducted without the visual aids so many in other countries take for granted, there would be a tug on your purse strings as well as on your heart strings.

Three out of every five members in the Far Eastern Division are Filipino people. What evangelistic excitement pervades that fast-growing field! But many new members there are dropping away because they have no place to worship. How can Sabbath School members resist sacrificing to take advantage of this day of opportunity in the Philippines?

If only the world church could catch the enthusiasm and commitment that characterizes our mission program in the Philippines, in Korea, in Africa, in Latin America, our mission offerings would rise dramatically. The challenge and opportunities are greater than ever. Let's match the excitement of fast-expanding mission programs with the thrill of ever-expanding mission giving.

Thirteenth Sabbath offering, September 27

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

July-September 1986
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The *Collegiate Quarterly* is written by faculty, students, and friends of the Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in North America. Organized under the Union College Board of Trustees, it is coordinated by Campus Ministry and published with the approval of the North American Division Church Ministries Committee.

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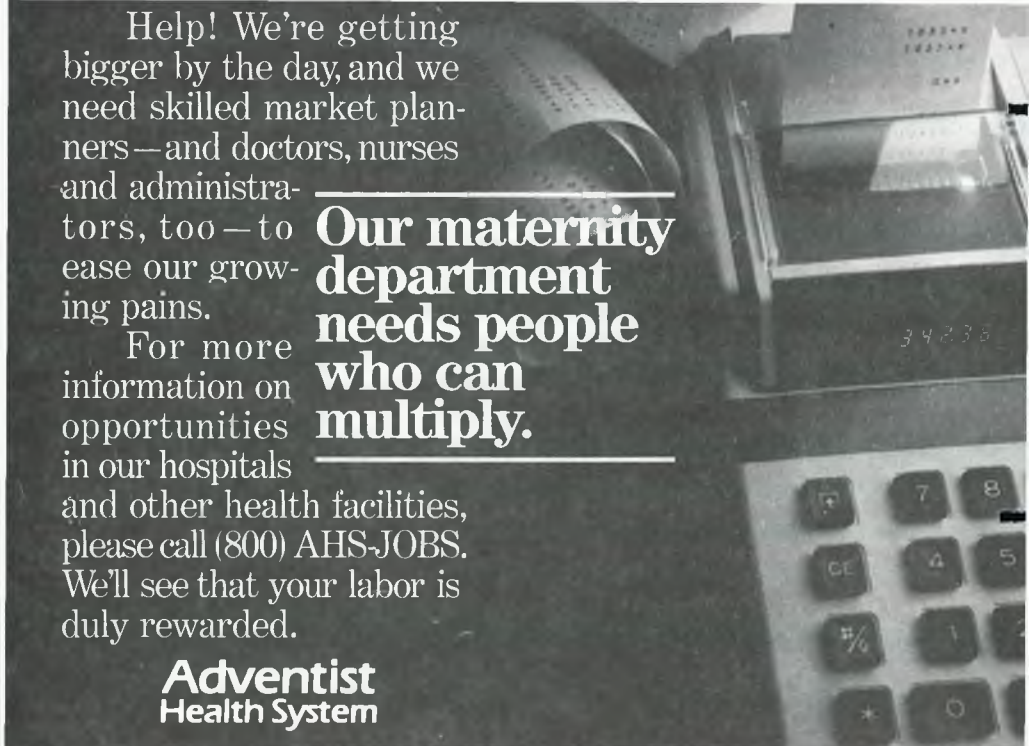
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HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THE COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

Facts You Should Know

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is based on the conviction that there is transforming power in the Word of God and that one important way of tapping into that power is through group study. It is prepared with Adventist college students and young adults particularly in mind. Its purpose is to provide this group with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed together each week in Sabbath School.

Additionally, many who use the adult quarterly find that the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY, since it deals with the same topics as the adult, enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist colleges and universities, along with young adult church groups, work together in producing the quarterly. The writing at each school is coordinated by the campus chaplain's office. Approximately 200 individuals contribute to the quarterly each year, on a volunteer basis.

Circulation of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is about 25,000.

Pointers for Study

1. The Bible passage to be studied for each week is indicated in bold on the Introduction page (Sunday's lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly Introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

2. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the Logos pages (Monday's lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in the bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

3. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained by your own study of the biblical passage.

4. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

Introduction (Sunday) is designed to get your attention and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

Logos (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

Testimony (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

Evidence (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from an historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective. It is likely to be the most "scholarly" article of the week.

How To (Thursday) discusses what the "theory" in the lesson means for day-to-day living.

Opinion (Friday) is a personal viewpoint on the lesson, meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

5. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

The CQ and the Church

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is the North American Division-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.* Particularly in the Evidence and Opinion sections, views are expressed which are only individual opinion, not official denominational positions.

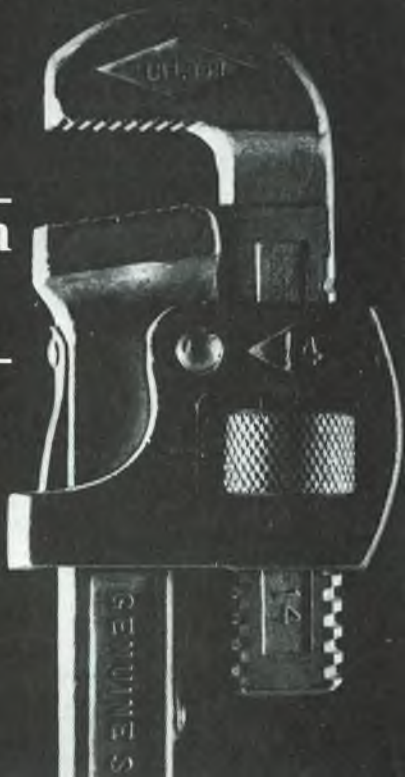
A hospital can't do justice to its patients' plumbing unless its own is in good working order. So if you're a skilled maintenance

person — or for that matter, doctor, nurse, or

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THE VISION OF AN EAGLE

An eagle has an amazing ability to see. Its visual acuity, I'm told, is about eight times that of man. It alone among living creatures can look directly at the sun and not be dazzled.

Sometimes in Christian art the four living creatures of Revelation 4—the lion, the ox, the man, and the eagle—are used to represent the four gospels. The eagle is the symbol for the gospel of John. Why this is so, I'm not certain. It seems appropriate, though, for nowhere in Scripture is there more penetrating vision into the mysteries of salvation than in John.

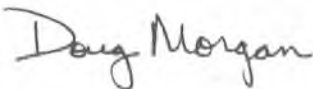
Like the synoptic gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), John records a narrative about a concrete, historical person named Jesus of Nazareth. Yet John's eagle-eye vision reveals the spiritual significance of Jesus more directly and vividly than the other gospel writers. In contrast to the synoptics, the gospel of John makes explicit Jesus' eternal origin and divine nature. Though He is fully human, Christ is declared to be the supreme, direct, revelation of God. The fundamental elements of earthly life—bread, water, light, blood—are used to make graphic the mystical truth about Jesus as the source of divine life. Miracles are followed by long dialogues and monologues which elaborate the revelatory meaning of Jesus' actions. Symbolic contrasts—life/death, light/darkness, above/below, truth/falsehood—are used to dramatize the decisive character of the revelation in Jesus. Response to Him (belief/unbelief) determines which side of the contrasts one experiences.

John is generally thought to be the last of the four gospels to be written, appearing late in the first century A.D. Like the others it was anonymous in its original form. However, we are told that the source of the gospel was "the disciple whom Jesus loved (21:24)." The name of this disciple is never given, but the process of elimination leads to the conclusion that it was John, the son of Zebedee, one of the original twelve disciples.

Certainly in reading John, one senses being "in the presence of someone who has meditated long and earnestly on the verities of the Christian faith: on God who is light and in whom is no darkness at all; on Jesus Christ his Son whom he sent into the world to save it; on the Christian life as essentially the recognition of being loved and the act of loving."¹

In preparing his gospel, John may have had a number of particular objectives relating to issues in the church of his time: to counter false teaching about the nature of Christ; to refute the belief of some that John the Baptist was the messiah, and to urge Jewish Christians to break fully with Judaism and identify openly with the Christian movement. All such objectives, however, are subsidiary to his main purpose, a purpose which cuts through all boundaries of time and circumstance: to present the career of Jesus to later generations in such a way that readers are led to belief and life through Jesus' name.²

The spiritual vision of an eagle, and the illumination of the Light of the world, await us as we study John with open hearts and minds this quarter.



Doug Morgan
Editorial Director

1. Norman Perrin and Dennis C. Duling, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1982), p. 329.

2. J. Ramsey Michaels, *John* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1984), pp. xxviii, xxix.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN—AN OVERVIEW

For the sake of those who use both quarterlies, the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY will follow the adult quarterly in taking a topical approach to the study of John, rather than going through the gospel chapter by chapter. Awareness of the basic structure of the gospel given below will aid in keeping the topical studies in context.

1. Introduction (1:1-51)

- a. *Prologue*—1:1-18
- b. *Testimony*—1:19-51

John's sublime prologue, which Rudolf Bultman compared to an "overture . . . singling out particular motifs from the action to be unfolded" is followed by testimony to Jesus from various witnesses.

2. The Book of Signs (2:1-12:50)

- a. *The first sign: water changed into wine*—2:1-12
- b. *Ministry in Judea*—2:13-3:36
- c. *Jesus and the Samaritans*—4:1-42
- d. *The second sign: a nobleman's son healed*—4:43-54
- e. *The third sign: a paralytic healed*—5:1-9a
- f. *Teaching in Jerusalem*—5:9b-47
- g. *The fourth sign: a multitude fed*—6:1-15
- h. *The fifth sign: walking on water*—6:16-21
- i. *Teaching in Galilee: the bread of life*—6:22-71
- j. *Teaching in Jerusalem: the light of the world*—7:1-8:59
- k. *The sixth sign: a blind man healed*—9:1-41
- l. *Teaching in Jerusalem: the good Shepherd*—10:1-42
- m. *The seventh sign: Lazarus raised*—11:1-46
- n. *Revelation to the world culminated in Jerusalem*—11:47-12:50

In this major section the evidence for Jesus' identity is presented to the world through a series of seven miraculous signs, interspersed with explanatory teaching and dialogue.

3. Farewell Discourses and Prayer for the Church (13:1-17:26)

- a. *The Last Supper*—13:1-30
- b. *Christ's departure and return*—13:31-14:31
- c. *Christ, the coming Counselor, and the believers*—15:1-16:33
- d. *Christ's prayer for the church*—17:1-26

Set in the context of the Lord's Supper, these discourses and the prayer meditate on the nature and significance of the passion of Jesus, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

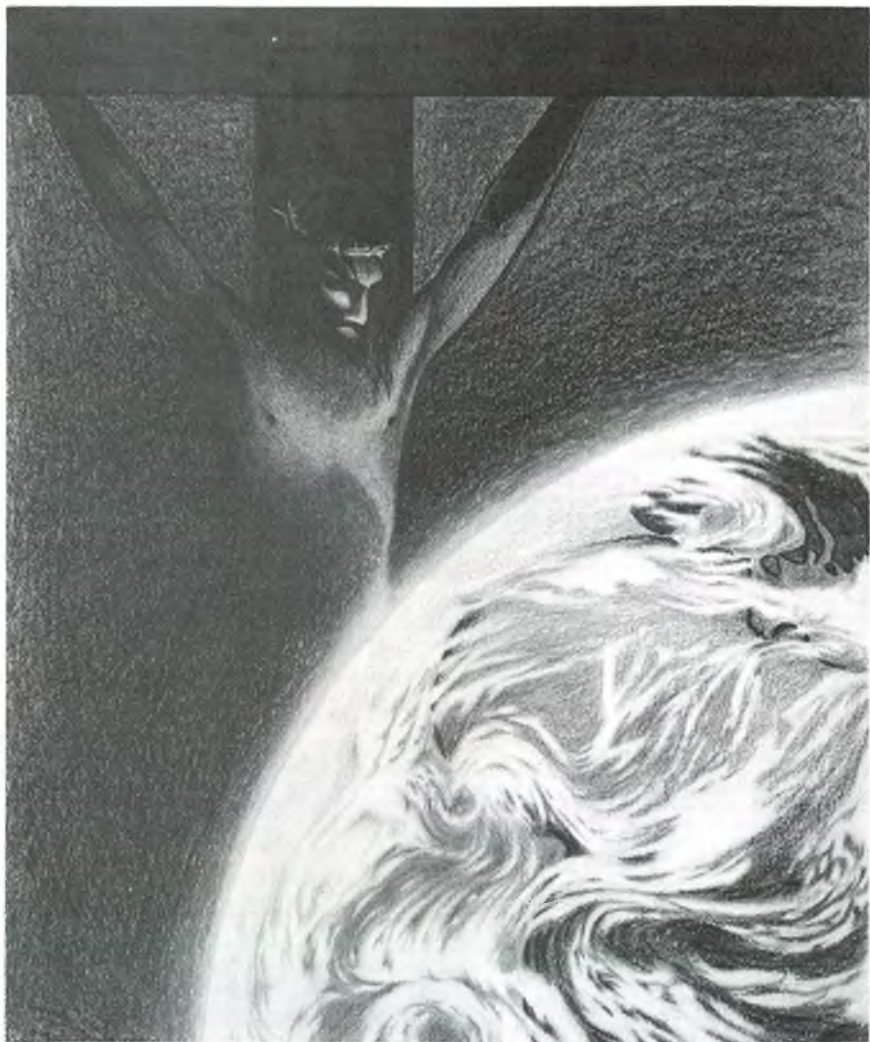
4. Passion and Triumph (18:1-20:31)

- a. *The passion narrative*—18:1-19:42
- b. *The resurrection narrative*—20:1-29
- c. *The purpose of the gospel*—20:30,31

5. Epilogue (21:1-25)

THE LIVING WORD

“The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NIV).



A Bringer of Light

by Patrick Creary

In the latter part of the 19th century the Caribbean region, Jamaica in particular, underwent drastic social, political and economic changes. The oppression and subhuman existence suffered by the predominately black population was beginning to come to an end.

It was during this time that Paul Bogle, an ex-slave, emerged as a masterful and energetic leader. Unhampered by a poor education and driven by a belief that God had called him to bring justice to his people, he stirred them into the struggle for justice and basic human rights.

Defying death, Bogle brought his complaints to the foreign rulers of his people. But their minds were too beclouded by the darkness of colonial imperialism to be sensitive to the light which was being nurtured in the mind of this noble man, and fanned into flame by his incessant activities on behalf of his people.

Bogle went through his community preaching the Word of God and making his people aware of their worth. He became very popular and was greatly respected by his countrymen. Soon his reputation as a champion of justice was brought to the attention of the Governor.

In a final bold effort to penetrate the social darkness of in-

justice which still engulfed his people, Bogle, accompanied by a group of his followers walked several miles to state their case to the *custos* (civic leader) of the local parish. They made just and reasonable claims for land, more wages, and equal rights.

The *custos* refused to acknowledge the validity of their complaints. He rejected the one bearing the torch of human dignity and universal brotherhood and the advanced perception of proper human relationships he represented.

Consequently, some of Bogle's followers became furious and they rebelled. Bogle was blamed for their actions. A price was placed on his head and immediately an island-wide manhunt was launched. Bogle was finally captured by a band of his own people, the people for whom he sought freedom.

Bogle's activities resulted in his death. He was hung in the presence of his followers. Nevertheless, his efforts were rewarded. The torch he lit continued to burn in the hearts of his people. In time, land reform was implemented and the general condition of blacks was improved. His country has moved from the shackles of colonial imperialism all the way to national independence.

Because he came as a light then, today he is a national hero of Jamaica.

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
John 1:1-18

Patrick Creary, at the time of this writing, was a senior theology major at West Indies College.

The Logos Among Us

LOGOS

Theme: Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God who became a human being, and brought light, hope, and truth into the world.

1. The Nature of the Word (read John 1:1-5)

"In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" (1:4, 5 NIV).

Moderns may wonder, if not puzzle, at the identity the apostle John ascribes to Christ at the beginning of his gospel. But to both Jew and Greek of his day, the phraseology he used held great significance.

To the Jew a word had far more import than being a mere sound or label; it was something dynamic, having independent existence. The Old Testament is filled with examples of this. The Lord declares through Isaiah that "my word that goes out from my mouth . . . will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11, NIV). It was as though a word held a life and action of its own. For this reason, once Isaac had blessed Jacob, he could do little for Esau (see Gen. 27). It was the *logos* (word) of God that created the world. "And God said, 'Let there be . . .'" (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, etc., NIV). "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Psalm 33:6, NIV).

For the Greeks, *logos*, as well as meaning "word," was closely related to reason. The highest reason was God. Thus, the *logos* was seen as the "principle of order under which the universe continued to exist. . . . The *Logos* was nothing less than the mind of God controlling the world and every man in it."¹ In using the *logos* concept, John placed Christianity, which has its roots, language and thinking based in the Judaic tradition, into a framework which the Greeks could understand.

But in John's thinking, *logos* is something much more than an active word or a governing reason. This Word is with God and it is God. This highest reason was before the beginning, He created, and through Him men have life. But most important of all, this divine entity became a man and through Him is the power by which men can come in contact with God.

What does John's use of the word logos suggest about cross-cultural communication of the Christian message?

2. The Witness to the Word (read John 1:6-8)

"There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe" (1:6, 7, NIV).

After introducing a theme that is developed throughout the gospel—Christ the light of the world, John interjects a short narrative on John the Baptist. In so doing he brings a tangible reality into the midst of a philosophical discussion. The truths the apostle John is

presenting are not based on philosophical musings, they are truths rooted in historical fact. John the Baptist witnessed to the light, the *logos*, the Son of God.

What are the contrasts made between Jesus and John the Baptist? Why are they important?

3. The Response to the Word (read John 1:9-13)

"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (1:11, 12, NIV).

Light and darkness are not compatible. Where there is one the other cannot exist. In a lighted room where there is nothing to obstruct the rays of light, no small sphere of darkness remains; darkness is simply impossible, with one exception: you shut your eyes. Then the room is dark even though the light is shining. It is the same with Jesus Christ. He, the true, genuine and greatest light came into the world dispelling all darkness. Yet darkness remains, not because His light is insufficient, but because those for whom He came deliberately chose not to see Him.

But for those who receive Him comes the power to become children of God, His own sons and daughters. How is this possible? "This sonship does not come from any human impulse or desire or from any act of the human will; it comes entirely from God. We cannot make ourselves sons of God. . . . It is what Jesus is that opens to us the possibility of becoming the children of God."²

If the "true light" gives light to every man (v. 9) why is it necessary for Christians to witness to that light?

4. The Revelation of the Word (read John 1:14-18)

"The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14, NIV).

John now comes to the culmination of his introductory remarks, which express the reason for his gospel. He has talked about the Word of God, that powerful, dynamic agent, that guiding and controlling influence which is God Himself, and about how God came to earth. But now, most startling and most important of all, this God has become a person and has made His dwelling among us! The great distance which separated heaven from earth is no more. The two have been rejoined by the God-man, Jesus Christ. "In Jesus we see the creating word of God, the controlling word of God, the controlling reason of God taking manhood upon himself. In Jesus we see God living life as he would have lived it if he had been a man."³ The glory of God—His grace and truth—is thus given its fullest revelation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

E.R.M.

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 35.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

The Manifestation of the Father

selected by
Orlando Moncrieffe

TESTIMONY The Word of God

Key Text:
John 1:1-4, 14

"The word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father. From everlasting He was the Mediator of the Covenant, the One in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted Him, were to be blessed. 'The Word was with God and the Word was God.'"¹

"What speech is to thought, so is Christ to the invisible Father. He is the manifestation of the Father, and is called the Word of God. God sent His Son into the world, His divinity clothed with humanity, that man might bear the image of the invisible God. He made known in His words, His character, His power and majesty, the nature and attributes of God. Divinity flashed through humanity in softening, subduing light."²

"Jesus is called the Word of God. He accepted His Father's law, wrought out its principles in His life, manifested its spirit, and showed its beneficent power in the heart. Says John, 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. . . .' The followers of Jesus must be partakers of His experience. They must assimilate the word of God. They must be changed into its likeness by the power of Christ and reflect the divine attributes."³

"When truth becomes an abiding principle in the life, the soul is 'born again.'"

"When truth becomes an abiding principle in the life, the soul is 'born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.' This new birth is the result of receiving Christ as the Word of God."⁴

The Light of Men

"In the manifestation of God to His people, light had ever been a symbol of His presence. At the creative word in the beginning, light had shone out of darkness. Light had been enshrouded in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, leading the vast armies of Israel. Light blazed with awful grandeur about the Lord on Mount Sinai. Light rested over the mercy seat in the tabernacle. Light filled the temple of Solomon at its dedication. Light shone on the hills of Bethlehem when the angels brought the message of redemption to the watching shepherds.

"God is light; and in the words, 'I am the light of the world,' Christ declared His oneness with God, and His relation to the whole human family. It was He who at the beginning caused 'the light to shine out of darkness.' 2 Cor. 4:6. He is the light of sun and moon and star. He was the spiritual light that in symbol and type and prophecy had shone upon Israel. But not to the Jewish nation alone was the light given. As the sunbeams penetrate to the remotest corners of the earth, so does the light of the Son of Righteousness shine upon every soul."⁵

REACT

Does the light from Jesus ever contradict previously revealed light, such as found in the Old Testament? (See for example Lev. 24:20; 1 Sam. 15:2, 3; 18:10.)

1. *Evangelism*, pp. 615, 616.
2. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1131.
3. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 576.
4. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 520.
5. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 464.

Orlando Moncrieffe is an associate professor in the department of religion at West Indies College.

The New Shekinah

by Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid

The fourth evangelist does something unique with the Gospel. He, unlike the three other Gospel writers, makes a theological statement regarding the infiniteness and immanence of Jesus. The Messiah is not simply one who was on earth and taught and worked as a good and brilliant teacher. Nor was He simply a Divine Being who "appeared" with good news. For John, the gospel is: "The eternal Word which [who] caused this world to come into being is the same Word which [who] shares in the creatures' existence."

John makes this theme clear by structuring a parallel between verses 1 and 14, the only two verses of this hymn (John 1:1-18) in which the term "Word" appears:

Verse 1

The Word *was*

The Word *was with God*

The Word *was God*

Verse 14

The Word *became*

The Word *dwelt among us*

The Word *became flesh*

The parallel shows that the eternal God cannot be thought of in abstraction from the human Jesus. And on the flip side of the coin it tells us that the human community shares in the fullness of the Divine through the participation of the Divine One in humanity's communal existence.

This conception was in radical opposition to contemporary philosophical and theological thought. In contrast to Greek thought, where the *Logos*, or "Word" was to supply liberation from the material world without becoming contaminated by it, John presents the Word as inextricably bound to human history. The Word, according to John, will bring liberation to humanity, *while* dwelling among humanity.

Interestingly, John makes this very "scandalous" idea of contact between the Divine and mankind very clear by his use of the Greek term "to dwell," *skēnoō*—literally "to tent." And here it is quite possible that he had an Old Testament motif in mind. The tent or the tabernacle (*skēnē*) of the Old Testament was where God's presence was. For John, Jesus is the New Tabernacle, He is the New Holy Place! Incidentally, the Greek radicals (SKN) for "dwell" resemble the Hebrew radicals (SKN) for *Shekinah*. Thus the apostle may be saying that the *Shekinah* is no longer hidden behind the veil, rather, the human-divine *Shekinah*, the Word, the Divine Light, now is visible to all. He dwells among us.¹

The Incarnation proves once and for all that salvation is not something simply other-worldly. Nor is theology, the study of God, something infinite and non-historical. William Watty, a leading theologian in Jamaica, has rightly pointed out that "the eternal dimension of theology does not negate its historical incarnation."² The Incarnation says to us that the infinite Word became part of, and shares in the historical reality of the world—even the Third World in its joys and in its oppressions! Only thus could He bring life, and light, and grace and truth. It says something more, it says humanity shares in the Divine—the new *Shekinah* is part of humanity.

EVIDENCE

Key Text:

John 1:1, 14

**"For John,
Jesus is the
New Tabernacle,
He is the
new
Holy Place!"**

1. See Raymond E. Brown: *The Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 32, 33; cf. F. Moody Smith, *John, Proclamation Commentaries* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 28.
2. Cited in Noel Leo Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective* (New York: Orbis, 1981), p. 85.

Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid is pastor of the College Church and chairperson of the department of religion at West Indies College.

Responding to the Light

by Sylvan A. Lashley

HOW TO
Key Text:
John 1:9

How can you receive and use the Light of the world? The question is especially relevant at those times when you feel spiritually illiterate and destitute, dwarfed and blunted by your inability to absorb and utilize Jesus in your life. Perhaps you have attended numerous Weeks of Prayer and listened to countless Sabbath sermons. Yet you still despair.

There is no magic formula for instant, effortless spiritual fulfillment. However, there are some proven ways of responding to the Light so that you are illuminated and changed

1. Receive the Light through a dialogical encounter. Paulo Freire describes this type of encounter in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He presents a theory for the education of adult illiterates which suggests that "every human being, no matter how 'ignorant' or submerged in the 'culture of silence,' is capable of looking at this world in a dialogical encounter with others."¹ Freire's illiterates soon become literate by conversing about political subjects and issues that affect them. They learn through praxis, for dialogue opens up the communication pathways. The more dialogue, the more acute and meaningful the encounter. We spiritual illiterates can be strengthened through our daily dialogical encounters with each other, with ourselves, and with Jesus the Light. Such encounters take place through prayer, individual Bible study, soul-searching and discussion of spiritual themes. We should explore every avenue for meaningful dialogue through encounter.

2. Receive the Light through thought and sense impressions. Dialogical encounter involves the process of receiving and utilizing. The process operates interdependently through our thoughts and our senses. Several centuries ago, two philosophers grappled with the method or process of knowing. Rene Descartes (1595-1650), in his *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, asked whether there was anything of which he could be certain. He finally concluded that the one thing he could be certain of was that he was a thinking being.² He saw the process of thinking—of looking within and reasoning things out—as taking priority over the impressions of our senses.

How then do we receive our thoughts? David Hume (1711-1776) offers an answer to this question by introducing another dimension of knowing and discovering truth in his *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. He suggests that no knowing or knowledge can come except through human experience and that experience is developed through sense impressions.³ Adapting the insights of these philosophers, we can conclude that our thoughts and our senses are gateways by which Jesus the Light can penetrate our beings.

Because Jesus, the Light, "lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9), each of us has some capacity for receiving and utilizing the Light. Culture and environment may modify how we dialogue with and encounter Jesus, but our intellect and our senses enable us to make the essential response to Him.

Sylvan A. Lashley is the vice-president for academic affairs at West Indies College.

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. by Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: The Seabury Press, 1970).
2. Robert Paul Wolff, ed. "Meditations on the First Philosophy" in *Ten Great Works of Philosophy* (New York: New American Library, 1969), pp. 109ff.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 173ff.

Rejection, a Remote Reality?

by Garfield Blake

Have you ever wondered how, after receiving so many evidences of Jesus' divinity, the Jews could still disbelieve Him, still reject Him, still condemn Him, and finally crucify Him? Incredible isn't it? How utterly unbelievable that the Light came unto *His own*, and *His own* received Him not (John 1:11).

Many today still shake their heads in disbelief, thinking, "Surely I could never fall into such a trap." It seems hardly likely that I, as a child of God would reject Him, while those I do not consider "His own" would accept Him. When we analyze the whole tragedy as depicted in John's Gospel, however, we see that such an occurrence may not be as unlikely as we would like to think.

The Jews did not reject Christ only because of His teachings and claims. Their rejection of Him was compounded by the fact that He frequently associated with downtrodden and disreputable people and even more so by the fact that many dimensions of his lifestyle were in conflict with the socio-religious norms of the day.

Imagine now, if the Light were to tabernacle amongst mankind today, what our response would be. What would the church think of a person who associated with pimps, prostitutes, thieves, and drug addicts? What if the primary purpose for associating with them was to show them genuine loving concern, rather than making them a church growth statistic? Wouldn't be good for our church records, would it? How would we react to a person who would go against the church's norms for the sake of good (Mark 3:1-6; John 8:1-11), or someone who, regardless of our criticisms and insinuations, continued to associate with known homosexuals?

Imagine an individual with tremendous crowd appeal, speaking ability, charisma, and intelligence, who did not seek office, but chose rather to serve mankind in a humble, and selfless manner. What about the fact that He would probably call many of our religious leaders hypocrites to their faces?

As the Light that John describes, He would be spending His time in hospitals, at parties, on the beaches, on the streets, witnessing spontaneously to people, talking with them, helping them, teaching them, in sum "dwelling among them" (John 1:14). Wouldn't such a man be considered "crazy," "liberal," "antagonistic," and "fanatical" by many today?

When we consider all of this, can we truly say that rejection of Him is a remote reality today?

REACT

How does your conception of how Jesus would act if He were on earth today compare with that of the author of today's lesson?

OPINION

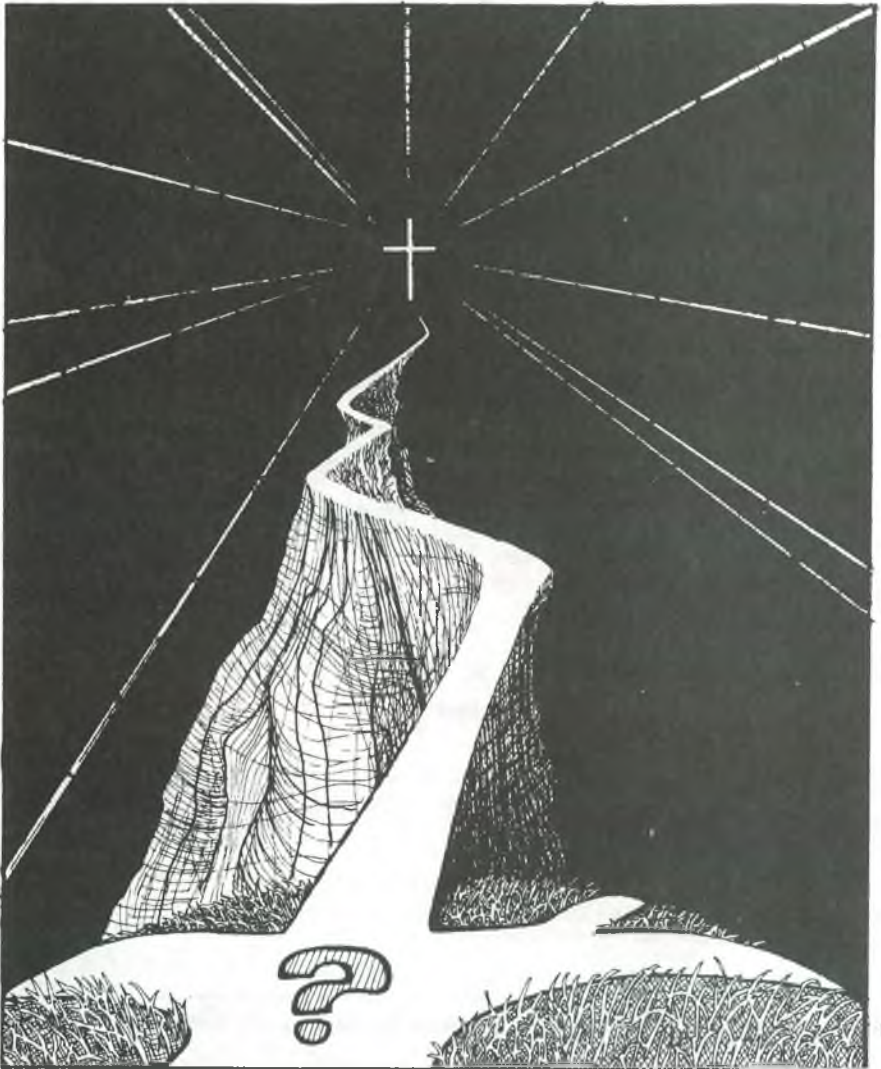
Key text:
John 1:9-11

"Many dimensions of His lifestyle were in conflict with the socio-religious norms of the day."

Garfield Blake is a senior theology major at West Indies College, Jamaica.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE?

“These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31, NIV).



The Joy of Being Believed

by Lola Christian

"Why are you here?" the customs officer at Toronto International Airport asked tersely.

"I have come to seek medical aid," I responded.

"You will have to see an immigration officer."

Bending forward because of excruciating pain from an accident I'd been in several months earlier, I slowly made my way to the immigration office, where the interrogation began all over again.

"Why are you here?" the taciturn woman behind the desk queried.

"To get medical help."

"Which doctor are you going to?"

"I don't know. My sister, who lives here, will help me find the right one."

"How much did you pay to come here?"

"Eleven hundred and ninety-six dollars."

"Don't you think that is going to be a waste?"

"Miss, do you know what it is to feel intense pain? I prefer to try and not succeed than not to try at all."

The officer then silently read copies of the medical reports I'd brought along, written by several general practitioners and specialists. Then my sister and I were independently questioned with even greater intensity than I had been earlier.

My documents were all in place and the answers my sister and I gave were consistent. So I was incredulous when the officer declared, "I don't believe your story. I'm not letting you through. Please wait outside."

I had been rejected! I was to be on the next plane back to Jamaica. What a devastating feeling to be disbelieved, despite having full documentation and a credible story. Were the feelings I had then akin to what Jesus felt when He was disbelieved, despite having full credentials?

But then suddenly a new voice penetrated my gloom. "Lola Christian, Floreth Christian, come with me!" It was another immigration officer. Slowly I raised myself up and followed her into her office.

"Your back must be aching, eh?" she sympathized.

"Yes, miss."

"I have read your reports," she said, "and I am going to release you, but your sister has to sign a bond."

How gratifying that at least someone believed me, that I was accepted! And it is encouraging to read in John that at least some responded favorably to Jesus. By studying the way they believed we can discover more about what it means for us to believe.

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
Passages in
John on belief,
such as 1:12;
5:24; 6:29, 47;
20:31

Lola Christian is vice-principal at West Indies College Preparatory School.

That You Might Have Life

LOGOS **Theme:** In John's gospel, *belief* means 1) conviction that Jesus is the Son of God, and 2) personal trust in Jesus that leads one to *do* as He commands, to commit one's entire life to him. Eternal life begins the moment such belief begins.

1. Belief in a Person (read John 20:31 and 14:1)

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:31, NIV).

The positive response to Jesus that John illustrates in his gospel and seeks to elicit from his readers is encapsulated in the Greek word *pisteuo*. Used in some form ninety-eight times in the gospel, it is most frequently translated "believe." However, its meaning is broader than the English word "believe," for it includes "faith," "trust," and "confidence" and is in fact sometimes translated into one of these words.

Belief in Jesus as the Son of God is the expected thing for those raised in Christian cultures because precedent for this belief has been set for almost two thousand years. Our fathers were familiar with this belief, as were their fathers before them and so on down through history. But for those generations living in or a little after the time of Christ there was no such heritage. Those who knew Christ in the flesh were familiar with Jesus the man, the Jesus born of a woman, the Jesus who bled and died as a result of Roman capital punishment. Granted there were a few who witnessed the resurrected Jesus, and from them we receive the great legacy of Jesus the Son of God. But for the majority who were not privileged to this personal witness, the challenge was to believe that Jesus the man was also Jesus the God. The purpose of John's gospel was to lead readers to that conviction.

We, on the other hand, are scores of generations and thousands of years from the man Jesus Christ. The result is that we are perhaps more familiar with Jesus the God than Jesus the person. Through the passing years He has been exalted as Lord and Savior, and rightly so, but He also needs to be seen as the man, our highest example who showed what it is to be fully human.

What are the implications of believing, in the full sense of the word as John uses it, that Jesus is the supreme demonstration of human-ness?

2. The Work of Believing

"Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent'" (John 6:29, NIV).

Despite the typology of the sacrificial system, the Jews had trouble understanding salvation. Though the Pharisees are often disparaged, their multitudinal laws were nothing more than an attempt to systematize the way of salvation and make it plain. Their system, if

not correct, was at least well laid out. Thus when Jesus' listeners asked Him about the works of God, they expected Him to give a system by which they could achieve salvation, a new list, the following of which would assure salvation. Instead, He offered Himself. To achieve salvation one need only believe in Him.

But belief involves more than mere intellectual recognition. Devils have this but it serves only to incite their fears (James 2:19). Belief that leads to salvation calls for involvement. It means developing a relationship of love and trust with God, this being possible by coming to know God through His Son Jesus Christ. This knowledge reveals and elicits three things. First, that God is love with the response being that we both return this love to Him and give it to others. Second, God is holy and therefore our lives should reflect this holiness. And third, God is wise, therefore we should submit our lives to his direction and control.¹

Is belief a work by which we earn our salvation? (See also Eph. 2:8, 9).

3. The Result of Belief (read John 1:12; 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47; 11:26)

"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life" (6:47, NIV).

Many Christians do not realize that the promise of eternal life is not a promise of future realization but a promise of present fulfillment. All the above texts are in the present tense. Eternal life is now and continues through eternity for those who believe. Likewise, those who do not believe are dead now and if they continue to disbelieve, they will be dead forever.

But believers still die and non-believers are living. This apparent contradiction is simply a misunderstanding of what it is to have life and what it is to be dead. To have life is to live continually in God's presence. To be dead is to be separate from Him. The bodily functions of one who resists God may still continue to function, nevertheless he is dead for he has separated himself from the source of life, and unless he reconnects himself with God he will eventually be dead forever. But those who continually draw close to God will begin to live, and live forever. Temporal death may take them but God has not separated Himself from them. It is just a pause, a sleep (Luke 8:52, John 11:11-14, 1 Thess. 4:13). Life then, for the believing Christian is the same before and after this "sleep." Only the environment changes from a world of sin to a world of unmarred purity.

How does having eternal life now affect one's attitude toward tragedy and hardship? How does it affect one's lifestyle and actions?

E.R.M.

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1, Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 214.

Working Belief

selected by Patrick Creary
and Joan Francis

TESTIMONY Evidence Required

Key Text:
John 6:29

"Ministers tell the people that they have nothing to do but believe, that Jesus has done it all, and their own works are nothing. But the word of God plainly states that in the Judgment the scales will be based on the evidence adduced. . . . Our efforts in works of righteousness, in our own behalf and for the salvation of souls, will have a decided influence on our recompense."¹

Some Old Testament Examples

"When the children of Israel were encamped on the borders of the Promised Land, it was not enough for them to have a knowledge of Canaan, or to sing the songs of Canaan. This alone would not bring them into possession of the vineyards and olive groves of the goodly land. They could make it theirs . . . only by occupation . . . by exercising living faith in God by appropriating His promises to themselves, while they obey his instruction."²

"Abraham was human; his passions and attachments were like ours, but he did not stop to question. . . . He did not stay to reason with his aching heart. He knew that God is just and righteous in all His requirements and he obeyed the command to the very letter. . . .

"Abraham's faith was made manifest by his works. There are many who fail to understand the relation of faith and works. They say only believe in Christ and you are safe. . . . But genuine faith will be manifest in obedience."³

"Our efforts
in works of
righteousness,
will have a
decided
influence on
our
recompense."

The Results Are Sure

"All spiritual life is derived from Jesus Christ. 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God' (John 1:12). But what is the sure result of becoming a child of God? The result is that we become laborers together with God. There is a great work to be done for your own soul's salvation, and to qualify you to win others from unbelief to a life sustained by faith in Christ Jesus. 'Verily, Verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me [with a casual faith?—No, with an abiding faith that works by love and purifies the soul] hath everlasting life. . . .'

"The treasures of eternity have been committed to the keeping of Jesus Christ, to give to whomsoever He will; but how sad it is that so many quickly lose sight of the precious grace that is proffered unto them through faith in Him. He will impart the heavenly treasures to those who will believe in Him, look to Him, and abide in Him."⁴

REACT

Do today's quotations teach that salvation comes through faith plus works?

1. *The Review and Herald*, March 21, 1878.
2. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 149.
3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 153, 154.
4. *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 137, 138 (*The Review and Herald*, Jan. 30, 1894).

At the time of this writing Patrick Creary was a senior theology major at West Indies College. Joan Francis is the chairperson of the department of history and social science at West Indies College.

22 Tuesday, July 8

A Basic Human Need

by Olive Hemmings

The expression of belief in someone or something is a universal phenomenon giving rise to the religious systems which permeate and form the basis of human societies.

Predominant in religious expression is the element of mysticism, a subjective experience of having a direct apprehension of some cosmic power or force greater than oneself. To have this force dwelling within (Judeo-Christian tradition) or to become the force itself (Hinduism) is to be assured of an escape from the present human condition of subjection to birth, death and suffering.

Belief not only provides a philosophical perspective, but it also determines the quality of interpersonal relationships. Consequently, belief is expressed tangibly. This is evident in all religious systems. For example:

1) In the religion of Judaism, Yahweh is a holy and terrible God who relates to His people as a community. The Levitical laws emphasizing community preservation and holiness show clearly the Jews' tangible manifestation of their concept of Yahweh.

2) The activities of the early Christian Church were also a living witness to belief in a Messiah who proclaimed, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18, 19, RSV, cf. Acts 4:34; 2 Cor. 8:9-15).

3) The Hindu tends to put more emphasis upon *being*, through deep meditation, than on *doing*. This abstract self-centeredness is manifested in their tolerance of an oppressive caste system.

4) Rastafarianism, an indigenous Jamaican religious cult, grew out of a reaction against a "white God" in whose name the blacks were stripped of their dignity as victims of colonialism, and were kept in poverty. It is an attempt to find a God with whom black people can identify—a black God from the land of their ancestors. The belief that Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia is God, and all the other ramifications of this belief, give Rastafarians a sense of self-worth and a new direction.

It is difficult, therefore, to deny that belief in a higher force has throughout history enabled peoples to face their destiny with hope and courage. Even Karl Marx, who rejected orthodox religion, believed in an inevitable future Utopian society in which conflict would finally cease.¹ How much nearer his belief is to reality than the belief in the final liberation of the transmigrated soul (Hinduism) or in the resurrection (Christianity) is another question. The answer offered by the gospel of John is clear: Jesus of Nazareth is the true object of belief and hope for the future, and such belief brings power for a new, Christlike mode of behavior.

REACT

What are the criteria for judging the validity of either an object of belief or the tangible manifestations of a belief?

EVIDENCE

Key Text:
John 20:31; 14:1

"Belief in a higher force has throughout history enabled peoples to face their destiny."

1. Melvin L. DeFleur, et al., *Sociology: Man and Society* (Scott, Foresman and Co., 1971), p. 8.

Olive Hemmings is an instructor in the department of religion at West Indies College.

That Which Matters

by Ransford Waite

HOW TO

Key Text:
John 3:19

As Christians, we must understand that our knowledge of God is not static, nor our belief passive. "Knowing God," "belief" or "faith" is just the opposite—active and dynamic! Belief or faith involves the activity of the whole personality—our particular way of perceiving reality and of doing things.

God's purpose in the mission of His Son was not to condemn but to save. However, our reaction to His revelation of light determines our ultimate destiny. It is our essential character that is brought under judgment, and our character is tested by our attitude to light (John 3:19).

Believing is a work and that is what God requires. It is not, however, like the multitudinous legal works required by legalistic religious systems, but it is the "one work" which consists of an obedient attitude to His will.

It is crucial to your salvation to cultivate such an active, character-shaping belief. Here is how you do it:

1. Study the Word of God. This means more than a mere superficial reading of the Bible. Rather, after seeking divine assistance through prayer, study systematically and thematically, using study aids such as Bible commentaries and Bible dictionaries as necessary.

2. Develop an appropriate value system. After discovering the principles taught by the various Bible authors, use those principles to construct and appropriate a system of values for yourself.

3. Be courageous. This is necessary to ensure that you follow through with your new set of values in your daily living, despite pressure to do otherwise. The sense of purpose and meaning Jesus brings makes courage possible—it gives you something to live for and to die for.

Active response to the light of Christ means you are a "believing" Christian, with salvation guaranteed.

REACT

1. Is our quality of belief the basis of our salvation?
2. If Bible study is necessary to cultivate true belief, how can the illiterate or mentally retarded become believing Christians?

Ransford Waite is a recent graduate from the religion and business departments of West Indies College.

Authority and Power Through Belief

by Orlando Moncrieffe

In the gospel of John to "believe" in Jesus or in His name is to acknowledge that He is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). However, the evidence of this acknowledgement is "receiving" Him, according to John, who employs "believing on His name" and "receiving Him" as equivalent terms (John 1:12). "Believing" does not consist merely of intellectual assent to the teaching that Jesus is the Son of God, but involves a personal response that conforms to that affirmation—a "receiving" of the Son of God.

Those who believe on His name, i.e., receive Him, are given "power" to become the children of God (v. 12). The Greek word translated "power" in the KJV is *exousia*, which denotes authority, right, title or status. The use of *exousia* rather than *dunamis*, which means power, inward capacity, or inherent ability, has led many to contend that the idea in v. 12 is solely the conferral of a title to a new status—children of God, and does not include the impartation of any attendant power.

However, since John employs *exousia* elsewhere in his gospel in contexts in which it includes the idea of *dunamis* (5:27; 10:18; 19:20), there is no reason to insist that this is not the case in 1:12. Those who receive the Son of God not only receive authority but the necessary power to become children of God. They are born of God (John 1:13), from above (John 3:5-8), and the mystical birth is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8). They become children of God by the impartation of His life to them through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. This is the experience of all who believe on His name.

Such believing is so active and dynamic that Jesus could speak of it as work (John 6:29). His questioners wanted to know what constituted the "works" of God (v. 28). Jesus replied that belief in Him was the "work" of God. What God requires, Jesus said, is not the myriad legal works demanded by Judaism (nor the many pious acts of Christian perfectionism?) but the one work of an attitude of obedience to His will. The test of one's attitude is his response to Jesus because, "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 3:23). Believing in Jesus is a positive response to a specific command from God and reflects a disposition of obedience to His will. Thus, unbelief is not so much doubt as it is disobedience!

Since submission to a divine being is obligatory, believing in Jesus as the Son of God necessarily entails a submissive obedience to His divine will and a total commitment of our lives to Him. By believing (receiving and obeying), we are assured of eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 6:57).

REACT

Does the commission of an act of disobedience indicate that one does not have an attitude of true belief and obedience?

OPINION

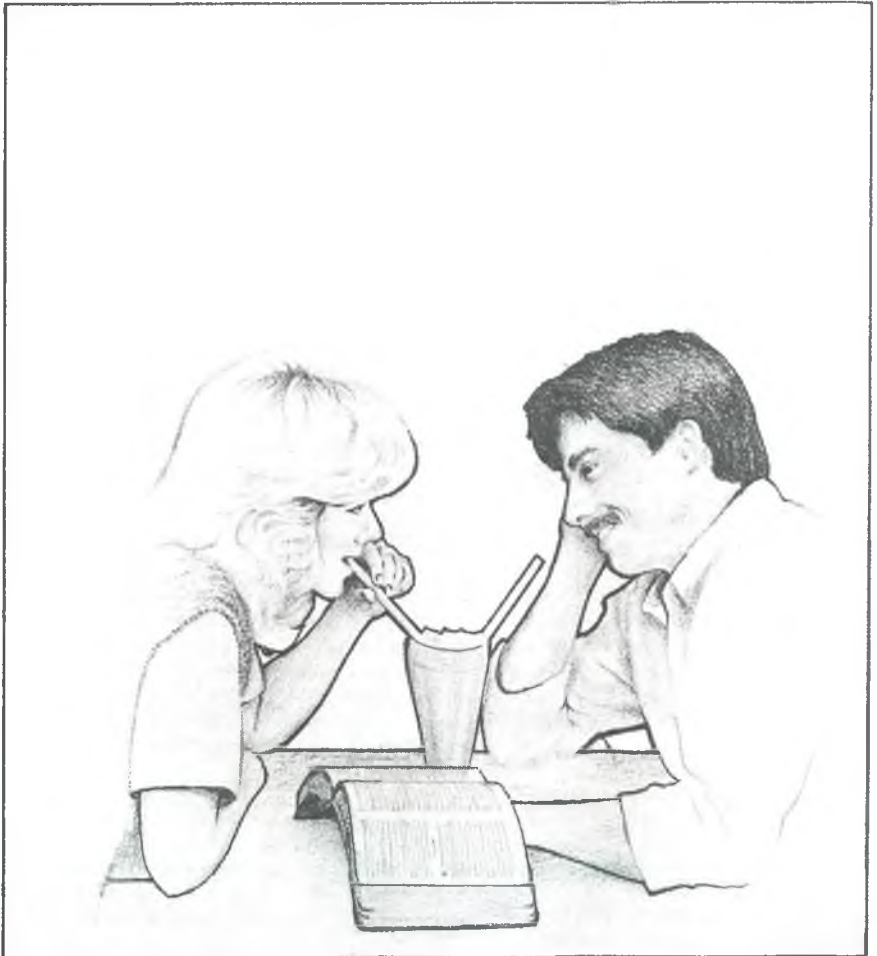
Key Text:
John 1:12

"Unbelief is not so much doubt as it is disobedience!"

Orlando Moncrieffe is an associate professor in the department of religion at West Indies College.

AUTHENTIC WITNESS

“Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see’ ” (John 1:45, 46, RSV).



No Evidence? No Witness

by Marie Erin-Mitchell

Imagine a court case in which a Mr. Martin charges another man, Davis, with taking money and valuables from his house and killing his dog. When asked by the judge to give his version of what happened, the plaintiff says:

"It seems to me that this Davis is the man responsible for the death of my dog, and for stealing money and other valuable articles from my home."

"How do you know that Davis is the one?" asks the judge.

"I think I saw him leave through my window. . . . I saw him in the yard, anyway."

"This court isn't interested in what you think you saw," the judge declares. "Are you *sure* that he is the man?"

"I suppose that he . . . I mean, I feel he could be because he looks so much like a man I saw walking around the house twice this week."

"Who are your witnesses?"

"I am the only witness."

The judge's conclusion to Mr. Martin, not surprisingly, is: "You don't have the facts clear, you have no evidence, and nobody else to substantiate your case. Case dismissed!"

Where did Mr. Martin go wrong as a witness? Webster defines a witness as "one who has seen or heard something." Mr. Martin's testimony wasn't acceptable in court because he simply did not see or hear anything about the case firsthand. Authentic witness requires direct, personal experience.

This week we study the witnesses to Jesus found in the gospel of John. Among the key questions as we try to understand what these witnesses can mean to us are: Was their witness authentic? What was the content of these witnesses? Can we, 2,000 years later, be witnesses in the same way they were? How?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
John 1:7, 8,
40-46; 3:32;
4:39; 5:31-40

Marie Erin-Mitchell is an assistant professor in the department of biological sciences at West Indies College.

To Tell the World

LOGOS

Theme: John's gospel gives us valuable insights on what it means to witness and challenges us to join in that witness by telling others what we have experienced in regard to Christ.

1. The Witness Jesus Bore (read John 3:11, 32)

"I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony" (3:11, NIV).

Abstract Christianity is of little value. To mentally acknowledge it as a metaphysical belief system is not sufficient. The Christian experience consists of more than words. It is based on historical fact, and it is manifested in the actions of God and in the lives of His people, in the past and in the present. It is tangible, its results visible. Its workings may not always be understood, nevertheless, its effects remain obvious.

As He explained these truths to Nicodemus, Jesus pointed out that His own manifestation of truth was authoritative because it emerged from what He had personally seen and heard. The incarnate Jesus gave the most dynamic, tangible witness about God ever. And that witness was the most authentic possible because Jesus enjoyed the closest possible relationship with the Father, being in fact one with Him. His witness, the greatest of all, flowed out of personal experience, and so should ours.

In what specific ways did Jesus make His witness tangible?

2. Four Witnesses to Jesus (read John 5:31-40)

"If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid" (5:31, 32, NIV).

According to Jewish law, no one could be convicted of a crime unless at least two witnesses testified against him (Deut. 19:15). The testimony of one, left unsupported, was considered invalid. Jesus, having just made personal messianic claims, realized the Pharisees were thinking about the two witnesses requirement, and thus He answered their unspoken charge. He did not *need* other witnesses, His was sufficient (see John 8:14). But He pointed to others so that His accusers "may be saved" (v. 34, NIV).

First, Jesus pointed to John the Baptist. It was he who said of Jesus, "I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34, NIV). But the Jewish leaders, though for a time attracted to John like moths to a lamp, finally rejected him.

However, there was a greater witness than that of John's—the works that Jesus performed. These alone should have been enough to convince any skeptic. Through them John gained the assurance he needed. When he began to doubt while in Herod's dungeon, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was "the one who was to come" (Luke 7:19, NIV). Jesus did not give a direct answer. Instead

he told them to observe. This they did and they went away satisfied (see Luke 7:18-23).

The miracles Jesus performed and the words He spoke all evidenced His divinity and attested to His Father's approval. As Nicodemus remarked, "'no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him'" (John 3:2, NIV).

Third, Christ directly named His Father as a witness. That witness was expressed in the voice at Christ's baptism, "'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased'" (Matt. 3:17, NIV).

Jesus' opponents had not recognized the Father's voice, but they were familiar with the fourth witness Jesus put forward—Scripture. Here the Father's testimony to Christ could also be found, and unlike the voice at the baptism, on a continuing basis. But though they were experts in the content of the Scriptures, the Jewish leaders refused to recognize in them a witness to Christ as the true source of life.

When it comes to believing in Jesus, which comes first, evidence for belief or belief itself?

What witnesses to Christ are available to us today?

3. Examples of Witness (read John 1:40, 46; 4:39)

"The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ)" (1:41, NIV).

The gospels, notably the book of John, are filled with examples of the joyful expression that results from meeting Jesus. We see Andrew. He followed Jesus and then the first thing he did was to tell his brother. "And he brought him to Jesus" (1:42, NIV). There's Philip who found Nathanael, his exuberance revealed by his invitation, "Come and see" (1:46). And there's the Samaritan woman, out-cast turned hero, because she couldn't help but tell of the man at the well, "the Savior of the world" (4:42). No courage was screwed up, no motivational appeals made. They simply met Jesus and in the joy of their discovery, they told the world of their meeting. This too is our challenge, not to force ourselves to tell the world, but to meet Jesus in such a way that we *will* tell the world.

What characteristics of authentic witnessing are displayed by John the Baptist (1:7, 8, 29-34), Andrew (1:40, 41), Philip (1:43-46), and the Samaritan woman (4:28, 29)?

E.R.M.

Total Witnessing

by Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid

TESTIMONY

Key Text:
Mark 16:20

"The evangelization of the world is the work that God has given to those who go forth in His name. They are to be co-laborers with Christ, revealing to those ready to perish His tender, pitying love. God calls for thousands to work for Him, not by preaching to those who know the truth, going over and over the same ground, but by warning those who have never heard the last message of mercy. Work, with a heart filled with an earnest longing for souls."¹

"The Saviour's commission to the disciples involved all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister. . . .

"Ministry does not consist in preaching. Those minister who relieve the sick and suffering, helping the needy, speaking words of comfort to the desponding and those of little faith."²

"There is a great variety of work, adapted to different minds and varied capabilities."³

"The gospel invitation is to be given to the rich and the poor, the high and the low, and we must cherish means for carrying the truth into new places and to all classes of people. The Lord bids us, 'go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. . . .' The work for the poorer classes has no limit. It can never be gotten through with, and it must be treated as a part of the great whole."⁴

"First meet the temporal necessities of the needy and relieve their physical wants and sufferings, and you will then find an open avenue to the heart, where you may plant the good seeds of virtue and religion."⁵

"A religion that leads men to place a low estimate upon human beings, whom Christ has esteemed of such value as to give Himself for them, a religion that would lead us to be careless of human needs, sufferings, or rights, is a spurious religion. In slighting the claims of the poor, the suffering, the sinful, we are proving ourselves traitors to Christ. It is because men take upon themselves the name of Christ, while in life they deny His character, that Christianity has so little power in the world."⁶

"The gospel is the power of God unto salvation when it is interwoven with the practical life, when it is loved and practiced. The union of Christlike work for the body and Christlike work for the soul is the true interpretation of the gospel."⁷

"We must cherish means for carrying the truth into new places and to all classes of people."

REACT

Is working for economic and social justice in society "witnessing" in the same sense that telling others directly about Christ is "witnessing"?

1. *Review and Herald*, March 4, 1902.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.
3. *My Life Today*, p. 220.
4. *Medical Ministry*, pp. 311, 312.
5. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 227.
6. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 137.
7. *My Life Today*, p. 225.

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The Star Witness

by Joan A. Francis

Witness is one of the key concepts of John's gospel. To be a witness, according to Gabriel Marcel, "is to act as a guarantor. Every testimony is based on a commitment and to be incapable of committing oneself is to be incapable of bearing witness."¹ The witnesses to Jesus in John are committed to establishing the reality of Jesus.

An analysis of the entire gospel of John reveals that there are seven who bear witness to Jesus. Apart from Christ Himself, the Father and the Spirit bear witness. John the Baptist, the acts of Jesus and the Scriptures are three more witnesses. The seventh witness is a variety of human testimonies which are the direct results of the ministry of Jesus. These human beneficiaries of Jesus' ministry include the disciples, the Samaritan woman, and the multitude.

As portrayed by John, these witnesses took varied but equally valid forms. For example, the Holy Spirit witnessed to Jesus' identity by descending on Him in the form of a dove after His baptism (John 1:32, 33). The Samaritan woman's story about her encounter with Jesus convinced an entire, previously hostile neighborhood to accept Jesus. Her testimony was simply what had been accomplished in her life.

But we find the most varied forms of witnessing in Jesus Himself (John 8:14). As the star witness, He countered the alienation in society, its racism, nationalism and chauvinism, its biases and fanaticisms. With his prolonged encounter with the disreputable woman by a well, He elevated the status and role of women. He bore a testimony of caring to those on the fringe of accepted society. His witness in Judea caused the religio-political leaders to unleash unjust reprisals against Him.

In this unorthodox yet divinely approved manner, He was always ministering to the physical needs of humanity. He healed the sick and demon-possessed, cured the deaf and the blind. His witness was not words only but praxis (action). Tom Hanks comments on this aspect of Christ's witness by noting that "the sight" that He gives also sensitizes the human conscience. It provides a new spiritual discernment that sheds light on the human situation, especially on the suffering poor. This discernment can prod us not only into praying for the sick, but into working.²

The authentic witness "is to be involved as Jesus was involved, not isolated, but in contact, not compromising but concerned . . . not conquering but transforming, not compartmentalized but integrated."³ Modern day witness to Jesus will, like the Savior's own witness, involve an identification with the community and its needs.

REACT

How "in contact" with society are you and your church? How might we as a church be more relevant without compromising the essentials of our witness?

EVIDENCE

Key Texts:
Luke 4:18;
Luke 7:22;
Matthew
25:35, 36

"He countered the alienation in society, its racism, nationalism and chauvinism."

1. Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence* (London, 1948), p. 67-76, as quoted in Leon Morris, *John, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 90.

2. Thomas D. Hanks, *God So Loved The Third World* (New York: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 113.

3. Karl E. Keefee, "Christianity Living in a Non-Christian World," *Christianity Today*, December 6, 1968, p. 14.

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No More Crown Worries

by Gloria Wright

HOW TO
Key Text:
John 15:27

My experience as a new Seventh-day Adventist, during my pre-teen and teenage years, is etched very deeply in my memory. Two statements, linked together, were the source of much anxiety for me. In essence they were: "Each star in the crown of the saints is for a soul won," and "There will be no starless crowns in heaven." The logical conclusion from those two dicta was only too obvious. So, I was fully involved in organizing and participating in missionary endeavors. Yet for years I remained tense and burdened by the weight of my responsibility and duty to save all those souls I saw every waking hour.

Today, however, these two statements no longer deliver the same, anxiety-producing impact. My frustration over guilt-motivated witnessing, along with an even greater degree of dissatisfaction with a non-involved posture in regard to witnessing, led to much reflection over the years. Eventually I developed an approach which eases the pressure from my conscience, and more significantly, makes witnessing activities synonymous with the Christian lifestyle, not a superimposed burden. I'll share it with you.

1. Commit yourself to God each morning for the purpose of witnessing. Witnessing opportunities and experiences materialize in the most unexpected times, manner and places; and it's usually in the middle of sharing—or afterward—that it hits home: "Wow! I'm doing it—no, He's doing it!"

2. Ask God to make your witnessing a ministry to some person's need. The great thing about this approach is that He is now completely responsible for placing you in the witnessing situation, as well as for using you to witness. Even if you slip inadvertently, you can leave the responsibility of fixing it up to Him.

3. Be prepared to share yourself. As you move through your day, you will encounter many persons whose needs may or may not be obvious. It could be a crying child with a broken toy, or a smoker who needs to quit. Your ministry may be listening quietly while your best friend relates for the fortieth time how she made a fool of herself in her last love relationship.

4. Accept the results of your witnessing efforts. Even if you can't identify immediate results, do not be discouraged, you have still witnessed. Remember your aim is not to baptize but to share.

5. Keep always uppermost in your mind that witnessing is all for God's glory. I don't need to claim the credit for anyone's baptism, nor responsibility for their salvation. (I've often wondered what would happen to the stars, and therefore, the crown, if those converts dropped out before the end!) I leave the final tallying to the Great Transformer whose tool I am. Somehow I think He values my total commitment more than my hard work. The fringe benefits are exhilarating when they are not tainted by the fright and tension and anxiety of trying to plan, locate and execute the whole thing successfully. It's that simple!

Gloria Wright is an associate professor of chemistry at West Indies College.

Beyond Proselytizing

by Dave C. Lawrence

Witnessing is inherent in the very notion of church. As Harold De Wolff points out, "The church and mission are not electives of the Christian life. To be in the church and to participate in the Christian mission to the world belongs to the very nature of the Christian existence."¹

The matter of authentic witnessing is no easy ball game though. Witnessing goes far beyond efforts to gain converts, expand the church, or win the world. The time has come for an end to the kind of witnessing that merely proselytizes. Witnessing is the entire relationship between church and society. It is not merely doctrinal persuasion or an attempt at cultural cross fertilization but a sharing of the life from Christ through every interaction, at every level of human need.

Witness in this comprehensive sense involves every Christian, and every aspect of life—be it school, work, social life, recreation, community action, or organized church outreach.

We may be not ecclesiastical bureaucrats, eloquent preachers or erudite theologians. But we are all witnesses. As open-minded, warm-hearted individuals who have experienced the glory of God in Christ, we come to possess a consuming passion to share our faith with the rest of the world. We seek not merely to inject our "rightness" into individuals, but to let the love of Christ, through our influence, take seed and germinate in the lives of others.

REACT

1. Should we make a conscious effort to witness each day, or does witness flow out naturally if Christ is in us?
2. Do soul-winning goals or programs tend to help or hinder true witness?

OPINION

Key text:
Isaiah 43:12

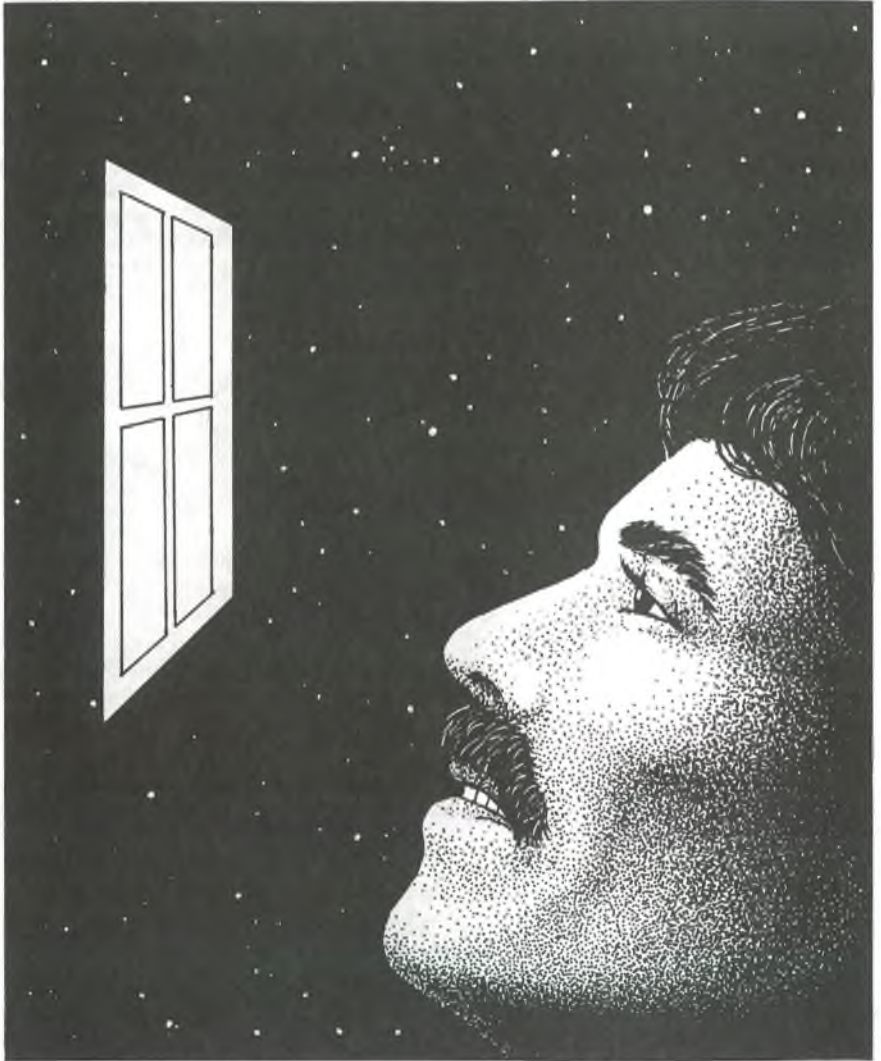
"The time has come for an end to the kind of witnessing that merely proselytizes."

1. L. Harold De Wolff, "The Gospel, the Church on the Mission," in Gerald H. Anderson ed., *Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1967).

Dave C. Lawrence, at the time of writing, was a senior general studies major at West Indies College.

WINDOWS ON REALITY

“No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (John 1:18, NIV).



Focusing on the Important

by Roger Abrew

A pharmacist visiting with friends in South America was invited to attend a "faith healing" service. Since he had never been to a service like this before, he decided to go and observe. During the meeting he stood near a teenage boy who had lost his right arm just above the elbow. The boy wore a short sleeve T-shirt and his stump was clearly visible. When people were called to come forward for healing, the boy walked up to the platform area and was healed—his arm re-appeared! The pharmacist was astonished and visibly shaken. He had never seen anything like this before. It countered his culture, his education ("the scientific method"), and his logic. In essence, it defied his entire background! Yet what he had seen was confirmed when he walked up to the boy and shook his new right hand. And the story is true—I know this pharmacist personally.

Some of us would question the validity of the healing (maybe it was a trick), or perhaps debate whether the healing came from God or Satan. Others might hold that we should not attend such meetings lest we be deceived. But is it possible that this healing was in the same category as the miracles of Jesus?

This week's lesson focuses on some of Jesus' miracles, which served as signs of his identity. As with the healing of the teenage amputee, there are so many questions and observations to explore. Was the

wine at Cana fermented? Does it matter? Why did Jesus begin to show his power in this manner? Why did He heal the chronically-ill paralytic on the Sabbath? Did Jesus want Lazarus to die so He could demonstrate His power to raise the dead?

While I must admit that I enjoy the mental gymnastics of such questions, I firmly believe that in the final analysis the healings or miracles are not the important thing. What is important is Christ. Healings and miracles have only temporary value unless the person involved comes to Christ as a result.

The pharmacist who witnessed the healing in South America told me later that he had wished that he had said to the young boy, "Something much more important happened 2,000 years ago than your healing today. Jesus died for you, for me, for everyone." But, he was so shaken at the time that he focused on the supernatural event rather than on Jesus.

We should be glad when people are healed or restored to health. And, we should follow such healings with news of the most important event in earth's history—Jesus at Calvary and what that victory means for all mankind.

Our focus should always be on the kind of person Jesus our God is and how He relates to each of us. Then, as a result, we will treat each other in a more gracious and loving manner.

INTRODUCTION
Scripture:
The miracle stories in John 2-12

Roger Abrew is a dentist in Vacaville, Calif.

The Book of Signs

LOGOS **Theme:** In John 2:1 to 12:50 John records seven miraculous incidents which serve as windows into the reality of Jesus' identity as Son of God and His power to meet every level of human need.

1. Signs in Cana (read John 2:1-11 and 4:46-54)

"This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him" (2:11, NIV).

John 2:1 to 12:50 has been subtitled by some scholars, "The Book of Signs." The opening "sign" is the changing water into wine at Cana.

Surreptitiously changing water into wine doesn't seem to be the way to initiate a mission having such magnitude as Christ's. Something in the way of a celestial choir hovering above Jerusalem serenading the announcement, "Jesus is the Messiah," or better yet, all disbelieving Pharisees being struck dumb as was John the Baptist's father Zechariah, would seem more appropriate. However, the quiet, unadorned simplicity of changing water to wine illustrates succinctly Christ's character and mission. He came not to draw attention to Himself. He came to meet people's needs. The Son of Man came "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28, NIV), even if the serving included contributing to the success of a small celebration, in a small town, in a small corner of the world.

The second sign in Cana also demonstrates Christ's mission of service, of meeting needs instead of expectations. The ruler came hoping that Christ could heal his son. He was not disappointed. Christ performed the miracle, but before He did, He served the official's greater need—salvation. The official came prepared to add faith in Christ as a postscript to seeing a miracle. Instead, *prior* to seeing the miracle, he left with a belief in Christ's word that introduced salvation (see 4:51, 53).

What lessons, beyond what is mentioned above, do you find in Christ's first miracle?

2. The Cure at Bethesda and Other Signs (read John 5:1-15; 6:1-21; 9:1-12, 35-41)

"When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, 'Do you want to get well?'" (5:6, NIV).

It would be wrong to say that all of Christ's miracles were undramatic. Few could come under this heading. But the drama did not come through an ostentatious display. Rather it was inherent in the miracles and their results. A quiet prayer over five loaves and two small fish fed 5,000 people. Some moist sand on blind eyes restored sight. And a sympathetic question filled with promise made a lame man leap. This is how God works, quietly yet surely, with the results providing the sensation.

The feeding of the thousands again shows that Christ's concern extends to basic human needs. His concern for humanity's salvation is ever present but it is not limited to bringing freedom from sin alone. It encompasses all needs: freedom from pain and misery as demonstrated by the healing of the paralytic and the blind man, freedom from hunger as shown by the miracle of the five loaves and two small fishes, and freedom from fear and depression as evidenced in the miracle of Christ walking on the water.

But in each case the meeting of a basic need led to the fulfilling of a higher one. The man healed at the pool had first his physical condition healed and then his spiritual condition—"do not sin anymore" (John 5:14, NASB). After having their stomachs filled, the crowd then recognized Christ for who He was—"Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14, NIV)—though they still misunderstood His mission. It was after the disciples recognized Jesus walking on the water that their fears and doubts left them and they were able to say, "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33, NIV). And it was as a result of receiving his sight that the man born blind could respond, "Lord, I believe" (John 9:38, NIV).

Was there a difference between what was required of the man at the pool of Bethesda before he was healed and of the ruler before his son was healed? (see John 5:6-8, 4:48-50). If so, why?

3. The Raising of Lazarus (read John 11:1-44)

"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me" (11:41, 42, NIV).

Of Christ's miracles, there was none greater than this and in none other is the nature of Christ more clearly seen. This miracle was the undeniable proof that Jesus the man was and is also God the Savior.

Coupled with this picture of divinity in a majestic display of awesome power is the demonstration of divinity in deep sympathy with the human condition. Side by side are the statements "Jesus wept" and "Lazarus come forth," and in both there is hope and promise for mankind. "Jesus wept"—God is not foreign to our trials and sorrows. "Lazarus come forth"—someday these trials will end for God can conquer even death. "And God will wipe away every tear" (Rev. 7:17, NIV).

What clues does the story of Lazarus contain as to how God relates to human suffering?

What, to you, is the most important revelation about Jesus in each of the seven signs?

E.R.M.

Working on Sabbath

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 5:16-18

“Jesus had come to ‘magnify the law, and make it honorable.’ He was not to lessen its dignity, but to exalt it. The scripture says, ‘He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth.’ Isa. 42:21, 4. He had come to free the Sabbath from those burdensome requirements that had made it a curse instead of a blessing.

“For this reason He had chosen the Sabbath upon which to perform the act of healing at Bethesda. He could have healed the sick man as well on any other day of the week; or He might simply have cured him, without bidding him bear away his bed. But this would not have given Him the opportunity He desired. A wise purpose underlay every act of Christ’s life on earth. Everything He did was important in itself and in its teaching. Among the afflicted ones at the pool He selected the worst case upon whom to exercise His healing power, and bade the man carry his bed through the city in order to publish the great work that had been wrought upon him. This would raise the question of what it was lawful to do on the Sabbath, and would open the way for Him to denounce the restrictions of the Jews in regard to the Lord’s day, and to declare their traditions void.

“Jesus stated to them that the work of relieving the afflicted was in harmony with the Sabbath law. It was in harmony with the work of God’s angels, who are ever descending and ascending between heaven and earth to minister to suffering humanity. Jesus declared, ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.’ All days are God’s, in which to carry out His plans for the human race. . . .

“The work of relieving the afflicted was in harmony with the Sabbath law.”

“The demands upon God are even greater upon the Sabbath than upon other days. His people then leave their usual employment, and spend the time in meditation and worship. They ask more favors of Him on the Sabbath than upon other days. They demand His special attention. They crave His choicest blessings. God does not wait for the Sabbath to pass before He grants these requests. Heaven’s work never ceases, and men should never rest from doing good. The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless inactivity. . . .

“Jesus claimed equal rights with God in doing a work equally sacred, and of the same character with that which engaged the Father in heaven. But the Pharisees were still more incensed. He had not only broken the law, according to their understanding, but in calling God ‘His own Father’ had declared Himself equal with God. John 5:18, RV.”

REACT

1. What is the “work” Jesus and the Father are engaged in and what is its relationship to the Sabbath (see Deut. 5:15; Ex. 20:11)?
2. What does this miracle suggest for our own understanding and observance of the Sabbath?

Progression Toward Glorification

by Tim Gallagher

In the Book of Signs (2:1 to 12:50), John uses miracle stories as a literary device to help us follow the step-by-step progression toward Jesus' glorification. This part of the Gospel presents the growing number of those recognizing the unique nature of Jesus' mission and message. To some in this burgeoning group He is a threat that needs to be thwarted; to some others He is the Christ in whom they can fix their faith and through whom they can enter into eternal life. The miracles give the reader checkpoints from which to judge the growth of this believing group, from its beginning as a tiny band at the marriage in Cana, whose belief was still secret, to the international multitude who heard the divine announcement which followed the raising of Lazarus (see 12:17-30) and who accepted the Messiahship of Jesus.

The transformation of water at Cana accomplished little more than the salvation of a party, but His disciples saw it as a manifestation of Jesus' glory and believed in Him (v. 11). This is the tiny beginning; at this point nothing is seen on a grand scale. His hour has not yet come.

Another window from which to view the progression toward Jesus' ultimate glorification is found in the story of the healing of the paralytic at Bethesda (5:1-15), which draws the attention of antagonists and supporters alike. A multitude is now following Jesus, and the religio-political leaders are becoming worried about His popularity (5:16; 6:2). The temporal element we're studying is graphically illustrated in the dynamic between these two factions. On the one hand, the crowd of supporters is growing and trying to press Jesus with adulation, but He will not go to the Feast of Tabernacles because "His time has not yet come" (7:6, 8). On the other hand, the authorities are becoming frantic, but Jesus is not arrested—again because "His hour has not yet come" (8:20).

The climax of the Book of Signs comes with Lazarus' illness and death, which is the point to which the other miracles have led. Jesus Himself sets the stage: "This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified" (11:4, RSV). Breaking the bonds of death becomes a sign of Jesus' power, i.e. authority. The sides are now drawn. The multitude is divided between supporters singing Hosannas and antagonists plotting death. The universe joins in the recognition of Jesus' glorification as He cries out, "Father, glorify thy name." Then a voice from heaven proclaims, "I have glorified it and I will glorify it again" (12:28, RSV). Jesus' ultimate glorification is at hand, and John closes the Book of Signs.

The time has come.

REACT

Read John 12:17-33 carefully. What is the nature of Jesus' "glorification" in this passage? What are the implications for us?

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 12:23-28

"The multitude is divided between supporters singing Hosannas and antagonists plotting death."

Tim Gallagher is a financial consultant at E. F. Hutton.

Framework for Fulfillment

by Bill Truby

HOW TO
Key Text:
Philippians 4:19

The miracle stories in this week's lesson have within them three basic principles to help us receive the fulfillment of our needs.

Before the principles are employed, however, it is important to have an attitude of trust that comes from a relationship with Jesus. Tenacious trust will enable us to accept God's will when we do not understand His way. On this foundation of trust we build the following three principles.

1. Clarify the need—state the issue clearly. In each of the miraculous incidents studied we find the first step was one of getting to the heart of the issue. Mary said to the One who knows all, "They have no wine." Of the man who had been an invalid for 38 years Jesus asked, "Do you want to get well?" To Mary and Martha He said, "Take Me to where you have laid him." Though such approaches may seem redundant at times, the goal of getting to the core of the issue was accomplished.

The importance of this step is to eradicate any superficial issues, clearing the way to work on the real need. A time of meditation and prayer or an objective Christian counselor can help us get to the core problem. Only when the heart of the issue is revealed can the issue in the heart be dealt with and fulfilled.

2. Cooperate with God by following His specific instructions. The instructions of filling the jars with water, picking up the mat, and rolling away the stone, were all very specific and well within the reach of human ability. By themselves they would accomplish nothing, however.

All of these acts could have been done by Jesus, yet He asked for the cooperation of those involved, indicating the importance He placed on working cooperatively with us. These simple, tangible, humanly-insignificant tasks accomplished some important results. They demonstrated to the universe the faith of the involved person. They acknowledged dependence on God and His ways, and represented a disowning of the weaker, human methodology, to accomplish the fulfillment of the need. They also demonstrated cooperation between the human and the divine. When we follow God's instructions today, these same results are realized.

3. Accept the fulfillment God provides. In each case God provided a miraculous fulfillment of the need. Such fulfillment was a gift from God which came as a *result* of demonstrating faith by following the instructions of Jesus.

With the foundation of trust, these three principles provide a simple framework for depending on God to provide the fulfillment of our needs. He may do it in a way, or at a time, we do not expect, but He will be the fulfillment of all of our needs.

REACT

Should the fulfillment of our needs be the *focus* of our relationship with God?

Bill Truby is the radio pastor and assistant manager of radio station KCDS at Pacific Union College.

“Do You Really Want to Be Changed?”

by Sheila Sanders

Jesus was very much a “people person.” He was interested in all that affected people: their daily activities, social gatherings, and physical and spiritual needs. Those from every walk of life, humble or highborn, all got the message that Jesus cared for and wanted the best for them. He was never so tired, so hungry or so thirsty that He could not put others’ needs before His own. All that He did not only fulfilled an immediate need, but also provided an opportunity to point out the loving character of His Father.

At Cana, by turning the water into wine, Jesus saved a humble village family from the humiliation of not providing enough for their guests at an important event, a marriage feast. He honored the trust that Mary, His mother, put in Him. He gave His fledgling disciples a glimpse of who He was, the Son of God. I like the analogy that William Barclay gives in his commentary on this passage. He comments that when we accept Jesus into our lives we are changed just as the water was changed to sweet wine.

The cripple at the pool of Bethesda, disabled for thirty-eight years and never able to reach the water first after it was stirred, was in a pitiful state of despair when Jesus approached him. In asking the question, “Do you really want to be changed?” Jesus went right to the heart of the matter. He was asking this man if he was willing to take on the responsibilities of being a whole man. So Jesus asks each of us if we really want to be healed of our spiritual disabilities and live a new life fully committed to Him. Although the man’s answer was not a direct “Yes,” Jesus perceived that he did want desperately to be healed, and Jesus honored the desire immediately. So with us, no matter what we must overcome, a sincere request to be made whole is always honored by Christ.

Certainly the most spectacular miracle Jesus performed was raising Lazarus from the dead. Christ’s enemies could not dispute that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. This time there could be no explaining away what had happened. Jesus knew they were plotting to kill Him and that it would hasten His death to go to Bethany, but He went anyway out of love for Mary, Martha and Lazarus, and to demonstrate from whom He received His power. His greatest concern was always for others.

Although salvation is a free gift, we must choose to accept it. Divinity and humanity work together. Christ turned the water to wine, but the pots first had to be filled. The crippled man at Bethesda took up his bed and walked, but he first had to make the decision that he wanted to be changed. And before Lazarus could come out of the tomb, someone had to roll away the stone. Jesus’ miracles show the magnitude of His willingness to meet human need, and that human response is necessary if the full benefit of His power is to be enjoyed.

OPINION

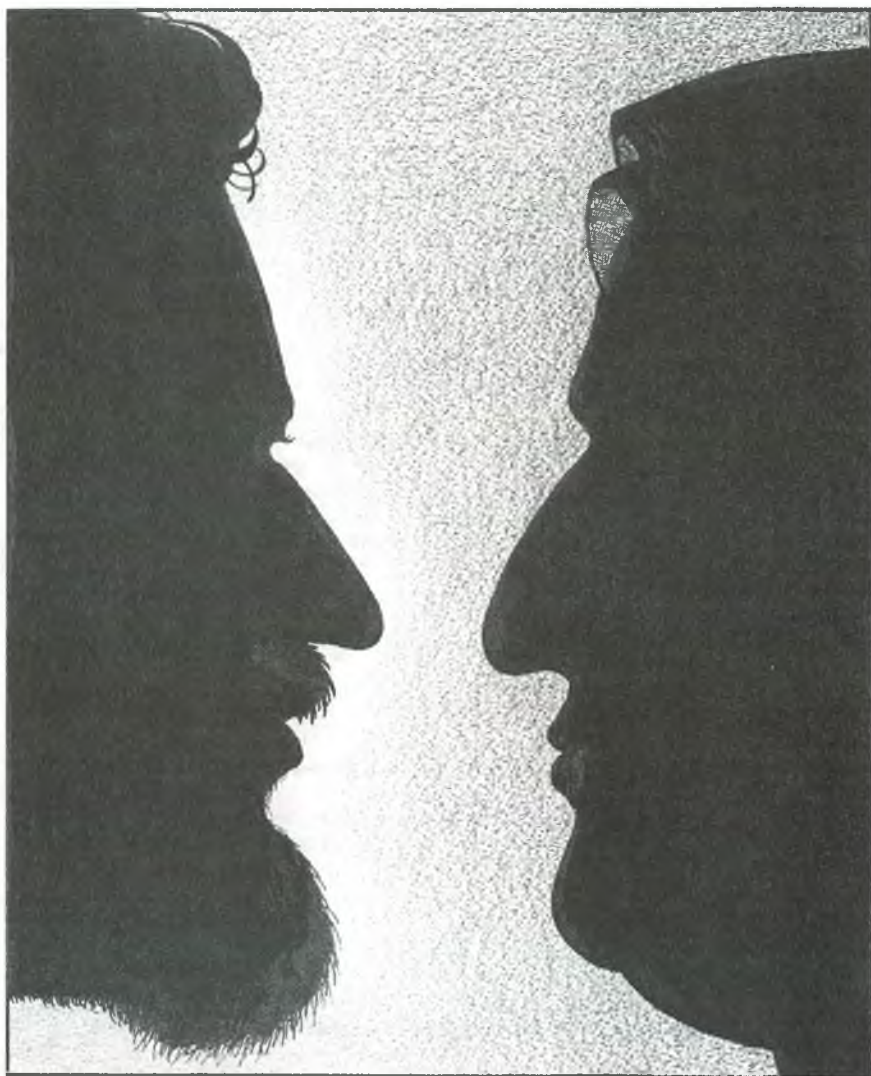
Key Text:
John 5:6

“When we accept Jesus we are changed just as the water was changed to sweet wine.”

Sheila Sanders is a former speech/language specialist now living in Napa, Calif.

JESUS ONE-TO-ONE

“Jesus answered him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God’ ” (John 3:3, RSV).



Because of Her

by Glenda-Mae Greene

The hot sun blazed down on her bent head as she trudged toward the watering place. The dark eyes, lined by years of disappointment and pain, widened as she caught a glimpse of a figure sitting by the well.

Momentarily, she hesitated. To have braved the noonday heat chiefly to avoid the hostile glances and disparaging words of the village women just to encounter a man was too much. Men had brought little more than pain and mockery to her life, and there was no reason to imagine that this man would be different. Deliberately, she straightened her back and tilted her head, pointedly ignoring the unwelcome visitor. Water was required to keep her household running smoothly and water she would get, strange men notwithstanding.

Letting down the skin bucket into the well, she was startled by a Jewish accent. "May I have a drink?" the visitor asked. Her shock led her to look more closely at this man who had just broken two rules of his religion—speaking to a woman in a public place, and conversing with a Samaritan to boot.

For a moment, she forgot the Eastern hospitality for which her people were famous and blurred out the first thing that came to her head. Then she bit her tongue in embarrassment at the inanity of the question. But the stranger ignored her outburst and the archly flirtatious remarks with

which she sought to cover her gaffe. His subsequent discourse on living water intrigued and confused her. This man was talking to her as if He respected her and acknowledged her innate intelligence!

The animation in her voice vanished when He asked that her husband join them. To watch the disgust mask His face when He learned the sordid truth about her private life was more than she could bear. But somehow she could not lie about her five previous relationships, nor the status of her current one. "I have no husband now," she admitted.

Again the man surprised her, showing that He knew more about her than she imagined. Yet there was concern, not rejection, in His eyes. Then He revealed His own identity. "I who speak to you am the Messiah."

Uplifted and transformed by the encounter, the woman raced back to her city. Forgetting the slights to which she had been subjected for years, she encouraged all and sundry to meet the man who loved her despite her faults. Gone was the cowering stance, the downcast eyes. Self-respect shone from her beautiful face.

And the people, aware of the drastic difference in the woman and the changes that needed to be made in their own lives, went to listen to that amazing man. They too, overwhelmed by his understanding and respect, came to love him. Because of her and then because of Him.

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
John 3:1-21;
4:5-42;
21:15-23

Glenda-Mae Greene is director of admissions and records at Kingsway College.

Encounters With Jesus

LOGOS **Theme:** The individual encounters with Jesus recorded in John reveal that Jesus treats people with the utmost wisdom and love, while challenging them with a power that can transform their lives.

1. Nicodemus (read John 3:1-21)

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (3:17, NIV).

Of all biblical encounters, this is perhaps the most famous, for it resulted in the greatest explanation of salvation ever.

Nicodemus opened the dialogue with a solicitous observation. "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God" (v. 2, NIV). For one of the Jewish ruling class, a member of the Sanhedrin, this was quite a confession to make. It was meant as a compliment to open a discussion, but was actually an admission of doubt about Jesus' true identity. Seeing this and recognizing Nicodemus' hunger for something more than his status could assure, Christ ignored superfluous courtesies and answered Nicodemus' need.

Christ's point made its mark, but wrapping himself securely in the robes of his position, Nicodemus professed ignorance. Surely he, a leading Pharisee, had no cause for rebirth. Ignoring the argument, Jesus gently reaffirmed his statement. Standing or rank have no place. The only way to enter the kingdom of God is to be born of water and of the Spirit. So foreign was this to Nicodemus, that he, a teacher of Israel, became confused. How could these things be? Was he not a member of God's chosen, a child of Abraham, a trustee and guardian of the law given to Moses? But, as Christ explained, these things "of flesh" cannot avail for salvation. What is needed is a birth of the Spirit.

What does Christ's meeting with Nicodemus reveal about how Christ related to people?

What does it mean to be "born of the Spirit"?

2. The Samaritan Woman (read John 4:5-42)

"Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life'" (4:13, 14, NIV).

Once again it is evident that Jesus held little regard for position or class. He saw all as equals in their need for salvation. And to this need He constantly sought to minister. With Nicodemus it meant putting aside a theoretical discussion to talk about the experiential issue of salvation. With the Samaritan woman it required asking a favor.

There are two ways to establish trust. The first is to give a favor. The second and more effective, is to ask a favor. Asking a favor makes you vulnerable, open to another. By asking you place the other in a position of superiority because he can fulfill your need.

By using this approach with the Samaritan woman, Christ effectively removed all barriers between the two. The walls of separation, bolstered by years of prejudice, were broken. Now He was able to offer the fulfillment to her needs.

With the way made open, Christ continued His gentle leading, never forcing an issue, always seeking to direct the woman to a belief in Him. Though baited for argument, He sought to direct His listener from controversy to acceptance of satisfaction for a previously unquenchable thirst.

What principles does this encounter suggest about how to reach across barriers of race, culture, worldview and lifestyle with Christian love?

3. Peter (read John 21:15-23)

"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?'" (21:15, NIV).

Hope had been restored to the disciples once more. The complete devastation caused by the death of Christ had given way to the joyful awe inspired by their risen Lord. Their sorrow and confusion had been replaced by exhilaration and confidence in Christ. But for Peter there remained the painful memory that he had denied his Lord. He felt he had forfeited his position as a member of the chosen twelve. Thus Christ provided this opportunity to demonstrate before the other disciples Peter's repentance and commission as a disciple.

Through the dialogue the depth of Peter's repentance is evident. When Christ asked Peter, "Do you love me?" the word for love He used was *agape*, the highest and most ideal form of love—selfless and unconditional. In contrast to an earlier, boastful declaration, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will" (Matt. 26:33, NIV), Peter now replied in humility. He affirmed his love for the Lord, but the verb he used for love was not *agape*—the highest ideal. Rather, he used *phileo*, meaning, "you know that I love you as a friend." He made no pretenses. He no longer trusted himself. He didn't attest to his own sincerity, rather he appealed to Christ's ability to read his heart.

Twice Jesus repeated the same question and twice Peter gave the same answer. The third time, however, Jesus altered the question a little bit. He brought Himself down to Peter's level, and used the same verb for love that Peter did. This was and is the way Christ deals with people. He met people where they were. He sought out their need, their good, their comfort. And by doing this He raised them to a higher level of living—a life in the Spirit that wells up into everlasting life.

What further insights about Jesus' character and way of treating people can be seen in this encounter?

E.R.M.

Soul Thirst Satisfied

by Ladd Dunfield

TESTIMONY

Scripture:
John 4:7-26

The Jews despised no race more than the Samaritans. In passing from Judea to Galilee travelers would usually cross over the Jordan and pass through Perea to avoid hostilities with the Samaritans. If one did have to pass through Samaria for any reason, he tried to have as little contact with the Samaritans as possible. It is little wonder the Samaritan woman was shocked by Jesus' asking for a drink from the well. But as Jesus drew her out, showing love and compassion in His conversation with her, the woman's prejudice and fears were broken down. Here was someone who was not interested in condemning her, but who instead was truly concerned for her.

"As the woman talked with Jesus, she was impressed with His words. Never had she heard such sentiments from the priests of her own people or from the Jews. As the past of her life had been spread out before her, she had been made sensible of her great want. She realized her soul thirst, which the waters of the well of Sychar could never satisfy. Nothing that had hitherto come in contact with her had so awakened her to a higher need. Jesus had convinced her that He read the secrets of her life; yet she felt that He was her friend, pitying and loving her. While the very purity of His presence condemned her sin, He had spoken no word of denunciation, but had told her of His grace, that could renew the soul. She began to have some conviction of His character. The question arose in her mind, Might not this be the long-looked-for Messiah? She said to Him, 'I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things.' Jesus answered, 'I that speak unto thee am He.'

"As the woman heard these words, faith sprang up in her heart. She accepted the wonderful announcement from the lips of the divine Teacher."¹

In dealing with the Samaritan woman, Jesus showed us the model for one-to-one evangelism. Instead of condemning, He found her needs and filled the emptiness in her life with love and care. It was this warmth which stirred her interest in the things of the Kingdom. In Christ she saw the gospel being lived out—not by long sermons and thousands of rules, but through love and compassion in action. If we showed more of that love and wisdom in dealing with people, more and more lives would be transformed by the power of the gospel.

REACT

1. Are there modern situations similar to Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well in which we should place ourselves in order to share God's love?

2. Should we try to apply Jesus' method of dialogue in this encounter with strangers we may meet?

"Instead of condemning, He found her needs and filled the emptiness in her life with love and care."

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 189, 190.

Ladd Dunfield is a religion teacher at Kingsway College.

Straight to the Heart

by Floyd Petersen

The Characters

Nicodemus: A Jew, rich, respected, educated, a bit curious, certainly comfortable in his own sincerity. He was a leader in Israel probably not usually given to sneaking around in the middle of the night. What did he really intend to ask Jesus?

The woman: A Samaritan, poor, despised, a second-class citizen, uneducated and of questionable moral character. Why did she stay and talk to a Jew?

Peter: A forgiven disciple, and close to Jesus for years. He tended to be self-confident and a bit of a loud mouth. He did not yet fully understand Christ's mission or his own. Why was he put on the spot?

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 21:15

The Encounters

Nicodemus: Intentional, planned, secretive.

The woman: Coincidental, a surprise, unusual.

Peter: Perhaps a bit embarrassing with the others close by listening. Not quite the conversation one wants to carry on in public.

The Conversations

Nicodemus: Begins rather formally, with some beating around the bush. Jesus, seeming to ignore Nicodemus' platitudes, sets the course of the conversation in His opening statement. "You must be born again." Nicodemus is challenged. He is a teacher and now he is being taught. Lessons on the Spirit, the Birth, the Wind, the Light. It is the Gospel in three short paragraphs. It was a great deal more than he had bargained for.

The woman: Ignores Jesus as expected. Jesus asks a favor which is not expected. The conversation is under way. The woman soon learns more about water than she had ever hoped to know. It was the woman who drank her fill that day.

Peter: Not saying anything but feeling very good. With 153 fish in the net, he was a real fisherman again. Then the question, "Peter, do you love Me more than these?"

"These what Lord? These fish?"

Three encounters, very different from each other, yet there is a common methodology. In each, Jesus went straight to the point with a statement or question that caught the other person slightly off guard but did not create a barrier or frighten them away. Almost immediately each knew that this was no idle conversation. Jesus was in complete control and His message was stated simply, plainly, and personally: "You must be born again," "If you knew the gift of God," "Do you love me?" In each case the person was compelled to make a decision.

The Results

A Jewish leader became a humble follower.

A Samaritan woman was saved by a drink at Jacob's well.

A fisherman became a shepherd.

Floyd Petersen is a science teacher at Kingsway College.

The One-to-One Approach

by Jim Ryan

HOW TO PART 1

Key text:
Matthew
25:31-46

All of us who follow Jesus want to lead others to Him. We know that there is no greater experience for the Christian than witnessing the baptism of one with whom he has shared the gospel. Yet many of us rarely or never have this experience. We believe we are born again Christians, yet we have strong feelings of inadequacy because we are not leading others to the cross. Our discouragement is compounded when we hear and read reports of others who are having significant results. We may even make an earnest effort, but then, with no apparent results, give up.

Jesus, the Master of working with people, shows us the way to becoming more successful as witnesses. A fundamental point, brought out by the incidents in this week's lesson, is that people have to be dealt with personally, individually, one-to-one. When a honeybee approaches a large field of flowers, it has to go to the flowers one at a time if it hopes to accomplish its objectives. It's the same way with witnessing.

With the basic principle of concentrating on people one-to-one clearly in mind, we can look at some specific characteristics of Jesus' one-to-one approach, illustrated in His encounters with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman and Peter.

1. He met people as a friend, not a critic.
2. He showed deep understanding. He thoroughly acquainted Himself with the situation of each one he was trying to reach.
3. He broke through existing barriers and avoided establishing new ones.
4. He was willing, even against orthodox Jewish custom, to approach anyone.
5. He led those He spoke with to discover and face the truth for themselves.

"We have strong feelings of inadequacy because we are not leading others to the cross."

Matthew 25, where we read of the separation of the sheep and the goats at the second coming of Jesus, underscores the importance of working one-to-one. The service performed by the sheep (the righteous) to the "least of these" can only be performed one-to-one. Matthew 25:31-46 is perhaps the best passage in the Bible in support of the Caring Church concept.

Love people like Jesus did. You will have a better experience, our church will grow, and many more souls will be found among the sheep.

"Christ's method alone will bring true success in reaching people. The Saviour mingled among men as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"¹

REACT

Is love more important than doctrinal persuasion in bringing people into the church? If so, should we be more concerned about love than truth?

1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

Jim Ryan is the dean of men at Kingsway College.

The Foundation of Loving Others

by Bill Truby

In this week's lesson we find that Jesus devoted as much interest and energy to individuals as He did to crowds of thousands. This willingness to be involved with the "one" reveals many qualities about Jesus worth investigating and evaluating for our own lives. In this section we will look at two of these qualities: the willingness to associate with another, and the security of a healthy self-esteem which makes love-giving association possible.

Jesus was willing to relate to one individual regardless of the rank of that person or the context of the encounter. His attitude said "welcome" to any individual who would come close enough to notice. Some of His greatest truths were given to one individual.

Crowds give ego-inflating strokes. Some would-be caring leaders are bent toward only teaching groups of people, finding no time for the single soul. Jesus did not embrace this shallow philosophy. He was, and is, just as willing to touch the life of one leper as He was to heal an entire community. There is a saying that he who is too big to reach the individual is too small to reach the masses. Jesus displayed just the opposite quality.

Another quality demonstrated by Jesus was His ability to interact with all kinds and classes of people without fear of rejection. He was comfortable with the high-ranking official or the social outcast. He did not have anything to prove about His position, nor did He fear any loss of status.

This freedom to minister, in the face of social opposition or potential personal rejection, can only come when an individual is secure in his God and in his acceptance of self. The words of Jesus (Matt. 22:38), echoed by Paul (Gal. 5:14), demonstrate that the quality of self-love parallels the quality of love given to others.

If one's love for self is insecure, tentative, and inhibited by the fear of rejection, then love given to others will also be insecure, tentative, and limited by the fear of rejection. If one has received his standard of love for self from God, and therefore that love is secure, assured, and unconditionally accepting, then the kind of love given to others will possess the same qualities.

One reason Jesus was able to be so confrontive to a church leader, accepting of an outcast, and persistent with a friend was His personal security. He accepted Himself as the Son of God. The standard of love which He received from His Father, He gave to Himself. This allowed Him the freedom to give that same kind of love and acceptance to others. It also allowed Him the firm foundation of security to confront others with provocative questions or statements designed to help them grow. This healthy self-acceptance, or self-esteem, enabled Jesus to look beyond Himself and have a clear perspective of the needs of others.

When we allow Jesus to be a part of our lives we become free to accept ourselves. We adopt His standard of love for ourselves and others. While this produces a healthy self-esteem, it also frees us to minister as Jesus did, one to one.

**HOW TO
PART 2**
Key Text:
Galatians 5:14

"The quality of self-love parallels the quality of love given to others."

Bill Truby is the radio pastor and assistant manager of radio station KCDS at Pacific Union College.

Awakening Trust

by Wayne Culmore

**OPINION
PART 1**
Key text:
1 John 4:19

Jesus had a thorough understanding of human nature. He could read people more accurately than a doctor can read physical symptoms in diagnosing an illness. He dealt with all types of individuals: eminent representatives of orthodox Judaism (Nicodemus), individuals despised by orthodox Judaism (the Samaritan woman), and common Jews (Peter).

1. *Nicodemus*. His interest in Jesus had been awakened by the miracles he had witnessed, and he came for an interview to obtain more information. Jesus perceived a man with superficial faith even though it was genuine as far as it went. Nicodemus demonstrated respect, but caution; Jesus demonstrated acceptance of Nicodemus where he was, but desired to deepen and strengthen his convictions.

2. *Samaritan woman*. Using utmost tact, Jesus *asked* the woman for a favor rather than offering one. "The offer of kindness might have been rejected; but trust awakens trust."¹ Throughout her conversation the woman persistently attempted to avoid the issues that Jesus raised. But just as persistently Jesus brought her back to them until finally He secured the desired result. "Jesus came to the fountain as a hunter. . . . He threw a grain before one pigeon that He might catch the whole flock. . . . At the beginning of the conversation He did not make Himself known to her . . . but first she caught sight of a thirsty man, then a Jew, then a Rabbi, afterwards a prophet, last of all the Messiah. She tried to get the better of the thirsty man, she showed her dislike of the Jew, she heckled the Rabbi, she was swept off her feet by the prophet, and she adored the Christ."²

3. *Peter*. The three questions addressed to Peter stand in contrast to Peter's three denials. Jesus was communicating to Peter that He still loved him and had not cast him out (15:6). Also, the disciples were well aware of Peter's denial of Jesus and He wanted to reassure them that Peter still had an important place among them. Jesus had no problem with Peter's renewed attachment to Himself; the question was with Peter's will to love at all costs. As we experience forgiveness, do we become willing to love Jesus, and love Him at all costs?

Jesus knew His audience. He was people oriented. He looked beyond the surface to one's potential. In our dealings with others, we should seek to reflect the tactfulness and care He displayed in relating to different personalities.

" 'Jesus came to the fountain as a hunter.' "

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 184.

2. J. Alexander Finlay, *The Fourth Gospel* (London, 1956), p. 61.

At the time he wrote this, Wayne Culmore was the campus pastor at Kingsway College.

The Transforming Gaze

by Tim Gallagher

Each of the three stories we've dealt with in this lesson contains the idea of focusing one's attention on Jesus. In relating the questioning of Peter, John teaches us to first love Jesus, then to feed His sheep. Jesus tells the Samaritan woman to fix her attention on Him and her thirst will be sated. She responds by calling her neighbors who come to Jesus out of curiosity about the woman's reports, but who quickly exchange their interest in her story for an experience with Jesus Himself. This change of attitude makes her story peripheral, and Jesus becomes the center of their experience, too.

Of the three stories, however, Nicodemus' story, with its allusion to Moses and the bronze serpent, is the best example of the importance of focusing on Jesus. When the children of Israel were dying from the bite of venomous snakes, Moses, following God's direction, made a bronze replica of a snake and erected it on a pole. The smitten needed only to fix their gaze on this icon to be saved.

Jesus draws from this well-known story more than once (cf. 8:24; 12:24) and the point here is very clear. When the children of Israel focused their attention on Moses' snake, a change took place within them: the toxin became benign. If Nicodemus, here serving as a representative of all of Jesus' followers, will focus his attention on the glorified Christ, a change will again occur: the malignancy of sin will become benign. The simple act of focusing one's attention on Christ becomes salvific in itself.

How this can happen is explained by John in other places. 1 John 3:2 clearly states that when Jesus reappears we will find that we, His children, are like Him. At first glance this seems mysterious, because none of us would say we've achieved "Christ-likeness" at this time. John 17:3 offers a clue to the puzzle. Here we read that a knowledge of God and Jesus Christ will naturally precipitate eternal life.

This knowledge is a deep, experiential kind of knowledge that is gained only through the most intimate associations. Members of a very close family have this kind of knowledge of one another. This is a knowledge that changes us and makes us like those we love to be with, those we naturally focus our attention on. Children love their parents and grow to be like them. Husbands and wives love each other and their personalities tend to merge. The two do become one.

When Christ is the focus of our attention, we will become like him. It will happen automatically. We can't even stop it from happening. By focusing our attention on Christ, we will be like Him when we see Him as He is.

REACT

Does focusing one's attention on Christ bring about as instantaneous a change as looking on the bronze serpent did for the Israelites?

**OPINION
PART 2**
Key Text:
John 3:14

"The simple act of focusing one's attention on Christ becomes salvific in itself."

Tim Gallagher is a financial consultant at E. F. Hutton.

THE ULTIMATE IN LOVING

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV).



The Overcomer

by Lynn Neumann McDowell

A man had a section of land. His children loved the hills and bush on its edges, the deer and grouse that lived there, and his wife saw just the spot where her dream home could be. The man himself saw wheat and horses and cattle—the kind of farm he had grown up on.

There was also in that same neighborhood a young friend of the man, who wanted to return to school. But he had a wife and four small children and couldn't quit his job—unless he found another with flexible hours.

Often the older man would walk and think in the rich loam of his land. It was better than the rough bush soil he had helped his father break—richer, looser, and blacker, and he thanked God for it.

One day while walking, the man conceived a plan for those he loved. He would build the house that his wife longed for, his children would play on the hills, and he would pay his young friend to work on the house. It was a big house and would provide the friend with work for as long as he was in school.

If I put a house trailer on the land, the older man thought, my friend could live inexpensively, and when he emerges from university, he could give me what he is able.

But the older man knew his young friend was proud, so he packaged the idea as a sale. He said, "This trailer and half the land is yours to purchase. Live on it as long as you like

and pay me just what I paid for the half when you decide to sell it. The increase will be yours."

The young man accepted joyfully, but his wife fell to complaining. She missed her mother, the robins nibbled her strawberries, and the well didn't have the pressure to run her dishwasher.

One day a real estate agent approached the young man as he worked in his garden, in the rich soil that grew anything, which the older man loved—which the young man thought was just dirt.

"I can double your money," the agent told the young man. "I have an offer for cash on the barrel from a developer who wants to put a trailer court here."

That night as the young man washed his hands and shook the dirt from his feet, he told his wife about the offer. She recited her worn list of grievances against the land and the friend and prevailed upon her husband to take the money and move away. So the young man went to his friend and said, "I want to sell my half of the land. Subdivide it now."

"I will pay you \$5,000 more than you've been offered," said the older man, thinking about the ducks and the pond that the developer would drain and ruin for trailers. For the man's life was in that land, and no one lightly lays down his life. But years of complaints had hardened the young man's
(Continued on page 57)

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
John 3:16;
13:34, 35;
15:13

Lynn Neumann McDowell lives in Lacombe, Alberta. Her book, *Long Man, Small Island*, an insider's candid view of a modern mission station in the Marshall Islands, is soon to be released by Signs Publishing, Australia. Sunday, August 3 53

Love Personified

by Rod Colburn

LOGOS

Theme: Christ is the supreme expression of the boundless love of God—a love that involves complete self-giving in commitment to the highest good of others, even enemies. This love is to be our model in relating to others.

1. Redeeming Love

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14-16, NIV).

John 3:16 has no challengers for the distinction of best-known and best-loved verse in the entire body of Christian Scripture. Few Christians cannot repeat it from memory. It has been lisped by countless toddlers, proclaimed from the most powerful of pulpits, and whispered at the bedside of many a dying saint. What is it that gives this verse its universal appeal? The answer is simple: John 3:16 represents the gospel in a nutshell.

The verse makes two major statements. First it states that the gift of Christ to the human race is motivated by the love of God and His desire not to see any of His creatures die. There is no suggestion whatsoever that the gift is prompted in any way by any degree of human merit. It is a completely voluntary, selfless conferral of absolute love.

The second statement is possibly the simplest, most direct expression of the great doctrine of justification by faith in existence. Faith in Christ delivers life to all. Again no hint of human merit enters the equation. Neither the sinful nor the law-abiding person can be said to "have it coming." So simple to state, so difficult to accept. But, as John Calvin expresses it, "Our minds cannot find calm repose, until we arrive at the unmerited love of God."¹

2. Sacrificing Love

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13, NIV).

God's expression of love in the gift of his Son to the human race serves a further purpose beyond the transmission of salvation. It was also meant to be a demonstration that inspires us to love in the same way. Connected by Christ to the Source of love, we may gradually transmit more and more of the divine love to fellow sinners. Being of divine origin, this love is not the you-scratch-my-back-I'll-scratch-yours type so prevalent in our materialistic world. This love is of different stuff entirely. One who loves in this way is "ready and willing to forget himself and his own interests, even to the degree of forfeiting his life in order that he may help another."²

A century after John's Gospel was published, the church leader Tertullian cited the pagans of his day as saying of Christians, "See how they love one another!" And it was not a superficial love they

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saw, for they went on to say: "How ready they are to die for another!"³ God does not intend to inspire counterfeit love. He's looking for the real thing.

Is there a contradiction between Romans 5:6-8 and John 15:13? Why do you think Jesus used the term "friends" in 15:13 (see also vv. 14, 15)?

3. Inspiring Love

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:34, 35, NIV).

In this passage (as in 15:12) the exemplary nature of Christ's love is explicitly stated. Following Christ's example of love involves not only the supreme sacrifice of laying down one's life, but also consistent love for those we interact with day-by-day. Christ makes love—love as He demonstrated—a kind of executive order to be obeyed by all who would call themselves His followers. Thus love becomes a sort of trademark, a requisite characteristic, a test of faith for the Christian—and undoubtedly a far more accurate test than the ones we commonly focus on, such as dress, jewelry, and Sabbath-keeping practices. Love is to be the ultimate standard, and it is the most effective witness. For a church overflowing with love cannot help but be a church overflowing with souls.

What adjectives would you use to describe the kind of love Jesus displayed? Reflect on passages such as John 2; 5:1-8; 8:1-11; 13:1-5 or any other of your choosing for some ideas.

If love is the true test of a Christian, then is it insignificant whether we obey the more specific commands of Scripture? (see Matt. 22:36-40; John 14:15; Rev. 14:12).

1. *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. 1, p. 122.
2. Clymer, *The Interpretation of St. John*, p. 209.
3. Tertullian, *Apology*, 39.7 cited in F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), p. 294.

Love Gains the Victory

by Sharron Schaber

TESTIMONY

Key text:

1 Corinthians
13:12

My parents are two very special people. They have given of their time and money and of themselves, to help my brothers and me gain an education and become established in our chosen professions. Their sacrifice is overwhelming to comprehend, but only a minute measurement when compared to the love of God in giving His Son to save the world. In the following paragraphs, Ellen White describes the greatness and power of that love which motivated the greatest of all gifts, and which we should incorporate into our lives.

"The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God. The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and a tender pity surpassing a mother's yearning sympathy for her wayward child."¹

**"Love will gain
the victory when
argument and
authority are
powerless."**

"Satan has represented God as selfish and oppressive, as claiming all, and giving nothing, as requiring the service of His creatures for His own glory, and making no sacrifice for their good. But the gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. . . . It declares that while God's hatred of sin is as strong as death, His love for the sinner is stronger than death. Having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. No truth essential to our salvation is withheld, no miracle of mercy is neglected, no divine agency is left unemployed. Favor is heaped upon favor, gift upon gift. . . . He gives them all into the hands of Christ, and says, All these are for man. Use these gifts to convince him that there is no greater love than Mine in earth or heaven. His greatest happiness will be found in loving Me."²

"Love cannot live without action, and every act increases, strengthens, and extends it. Love will gain the victory when argument and authority are powerless. Love works not for profit nor regard: yet God has ordained that great gain shall be the certain result of every labor of love. It is diffusive in its nature, and quiet in its operation, yet strong and mighty in its purpose to overcome great evils. It is melting and transforming in its influence, and will take hold of the lives of the sinful and affect their hearts when every other means has proved unsuccessful."³

"Only like can appreciate like. Unless you accept in your own life the principle of self-sacrificing love, which is the principle of His character, you cannot know God."⁴

REACT

In attempting to emulate God's self-giving love, is it possible for us to give too much of ourselves?

1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 15.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 57.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 135.

4. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 25.

Sharron Schaber is a community health nurse working in Calgary, Alberta.

The Two- Second Christian

by Richard and Karen Bottomley

The Gospel of John contains some of the most beloved verses in the whole Bible, texts that require no memorization tricks to stay in our hearts. Yet the words of John 15:13, which conjure up visions of a mother rushing into a burning building to save her child or a soldier falling on a hand grenade to save his buddies are strangely disquieting for the Christian committed to rational faith. The fuse length of a grenade is about seven seconds, four to five of which are spent pulling the pin and throwing the grenade. This leaves the soldier in the foxhole with two seconds to react. Immediate action, not rational thought, is what the situation demands.

Does this mean that in times of stress or crisis we can rely on our instinctive reactions to pull us through? Not always. This week in our home city eight vigilantes grabbed an innocent young man off his bicycle, beat him with clubs and dropped him from a second floor balcony because they believed he had sexually assaulted a young girl in a nearby park. Meanwhile the police had already arrested the suspect. What is truly appalling is not the vigilantes mistaking the identity of the suspect, but the fundamental evil in their instinctive reactions.

It is this clash between an urgent demand for action and the dismal track record of people who rely on their instincts that challenges the rational Christian. Yes, our behavior in a crisis should be immediate and automatic, but our ethics must be determined by more than urges of self-preservation, revenge or group hysteria. This means the emotional highs of religion we experience in song-fests, prayer bands and Weeks of Prayer must be complemented with a cerebral acceptance of Christ's teachings. We must be convinced that loving others is our daily mandate. In the end it is the rational Christian who can best fulfill the apostle John's calls for unquestioning, intuitive love, for he has trained his instincts.

(Continued from page 53)

heart, and he would not deal with his friend, not even for profit.

With a knot in his stomach, the older man went to the lawyers and paid for all the transactions. His children railed against him saying, "Why give the land to that stranger? He's not your friend; he slaps you, takes what you love, and will never thank you."

But the man held his peace and gave the deed to his friend, for he was faithful—true to his word and to the man he called his friend. And he told no one.

For he loved the young man, and laid down his land for him.

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 15:13

"The emotional highs of religion must be complemented with a cerebral acceptance of Christ's teachings."

Richard and Karen Bottomley live in Calgary, Alberta.

Trite Versus True Love

by Richard D. Ferguson

HOW TO

Key text:
John 3:1-21

For many of us who have been raised as Christians, John 3:16 is a commonplace. Yes, we believe that God loves us and sent His Son to die for us, but we take that love for granted.

As a result, we end up casually throwing our prayers at God, calling on Him as if He were a heavenly answering machine. We schedule Him into and out of our lives to suit our convenience. We let what seems "urgent" in our frantic, modern lifestyles compel us to treat eternal matters as secondary. For us, familiarity has bred triteness when it comes to our heavenly Father's love and His Word.

How do you avoid treating God and His Son in this manner? How can your love for Him be true rather than trite?

1. Recognize the depth of your need for God. Before the great truth of John 3:16 could be meaningful to Nicodemus, he had to be made aware of his need (3:3). If God has been secondary in your life for a long time, it may be that you will only realize your true need if something goes wrong in your life. When the good life leaves you lonely and hurting or the competition puts you at the bottom of the heap, then you realize you need God and that He has not had His rightful place in your heart.

2. Recognize always that God knows you for exactly what you are, but loves you regardless. If you are honest with yourself about your condition, this fact will be an increasing source of amazement and gratitude. On the other hand, pretense or begging the question will be no more effective for you than they were for Nicodemus at his midnight interview.

3. Continue to accept the love God has for you. His objective is not to punish you or to throw you into the Lake of Fire at the end of time, but to get you into heaven. Take comfort and hope in His love (1 Tim. 1:15-17).

4. Don't let circumstance ruin your life. Neither wallowing in the guilt of failure nor basking smugly in success is healthy or pleasing to anyone, including God. Trust Him to continue to love you in whatever situation you find yourself (Phil. 4:11-13).

5. Don't think you can appease or manipulate God by your commitment, prayers and good deeds. He is much more interested in knowing you personally (John 17:3; Isa. 1:10-18).

When you make Christ central in your life, the familiarity of His love never leads you to take that love for granted. Rather, your own love for Him will continually deepen.

REACT

Do you think personal crisis usually leads people to be more receptive to God's love and leading? Why or why not? Are there other ways in which we can come to a full realization of our need for God's love?

Richard D. Ferguson is an engineering student at the University of Calgary.

The Heart of the Matter

by John McDowell

John 3:16 and John 13:34, 35 form the heart of Christian faith and doctrine. These texts provide the pulse of what we believe, the muscle and sinew for our hope and our ethical behavior: God loves us enough to save us; God wants us to love our fellow man. Oh, so simple. Oh, so difficult. The difficulty is strikingly apparent when we look at corporate or societal manifestations of Christianity.

A historical review of countries and people who have called themselves "Christian" reveals a not-too-flattering record in regard to practicing love. In the last several centuries it's been mainly people from "Christian" nations who have colonized and brutalized the "heathen" peoples in Africa and Latin America. In this century alone, "Christian" nations have started or been involved in most of the major wars. A "Christian" nation ("In God We Trust") first built and first used nuclear weapons. It dropped the Bomb on a non-Christian nation. Even the Christian churches themselves have inflicted a great deal of inhumanity on man. "Christianity" has been used—and is still used—to justify and support slavery, segregation, apartheid, capital punishment and the nuclear arms build-up.

When dealing with the question of what makes a Christian state, Graham Greene points out that "we should not be led astray by the presence of wars, injustice and cruelty, or by the absence of charity. All those things can exist in a Christian state. They are not marks of Christianity, but of Man."¹ Although the distinction here between the ideals of Christianity and the sinful actions of individuals is valid, Christianity *does* seek to deal with the marks of man. When individuals lose sight of the transforming nature of Christianity's core texts—that is when evil creeps in.

Unfortunately, the church, too, is prone to lose the message of love—both God's love to us and our love to our fellow man—even while it is preaching love. This can happen in a number of ways: when we insist on enforcing a specific policy for the sake of the "organization" even though it will hurt and alienate individuals, when we defend a doctrine to the extent that we cut off divergent discussion, and when we hold a rigid view of God that demands that all answers be locked in. Rigid views of policy, procedures, and doctrine display a low tolerance for people. While Adventists hold certain beliefs in common, what the church needs now is not so much to insist on doctrinal uniformity on debatable issues but to cultivate compassion and tolerance. As individuals within the church we need to *practice* ethical behavior.

The whole point of doctrine is *not* doctrine itself, but how it helps us to understand and *practice* the love of God. In the end it is our actions, not our doctrines, that matter.

REACT

Does Christlike love mean that all viewpoints should be tolerated in the church?

OPINION

Key Text:
Revelation
22:12-15

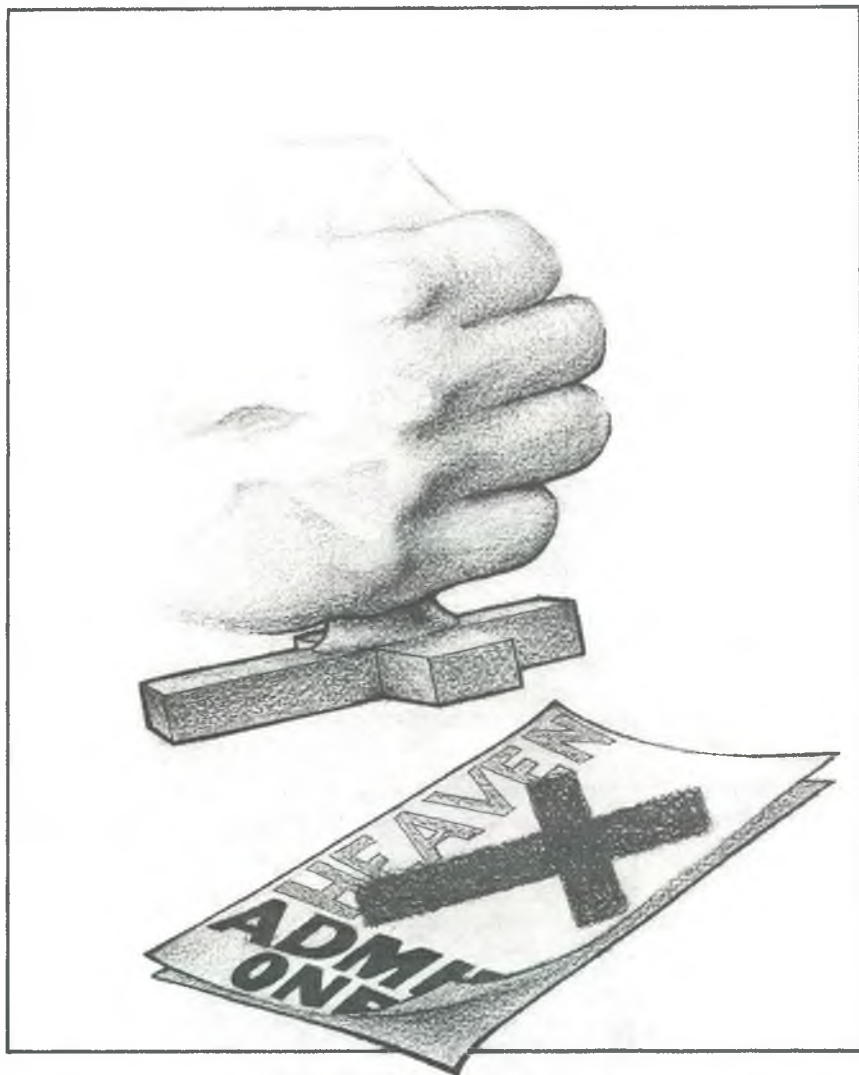
"Rigid views of policy, procedures, and doctrine display a low tolerance for people."

1. "The Last Pope," *The Portable Graham Greene*, ed. Philip Stratford (Penguin, 1977), p. 587.

John McDowell is working on his doctorate in English at the University of Calgary.

PASSAGE TO ETERNITY

“ I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life’ ” (John 5:24, NIV).



How Long Is Forever?

by Rod Colburn

The soft scratching of the four-year-old's busy crayons had fallen strangely silent and his lavishly spoiled Cabbage Patch Kid had slid head-first onto the floor. The pastor was reaching the emotion-packed conclusion of his annual "New World" sermon: "No more sickness, no more sorrow; no more pain, no more crying. It will all be just a distant memory. And we will live with Jesus forever!"

Not until the family car had entered its subdivision did the little boy, slumped thoughtfully in a corner of the back seat, stir. "Daddy," he queried, "how long is forever? Is it as long as the time between Christmases?"

Eternity. One says it with awe. Few words are so majestic and deep, so simple yet so complicated. Eternity is a concept difficult for mortal man to ponder, impossible for him to fully comprehend.

Consider for a moment American doughboys in World War I being urged "over the top" at the Marne by the taunting cry, "Do you wanna live forever?" Or, corporate "long-range" planning envisioning conditions only twenty years into the future. Or life insurance companies refusing to

write policies for those over 60. Evidence abounds that in the minds of most humans eternity in a practical sense lasts only seventy-odd years, plus or minus a decade or two.

This much diminished perception of eternity seems almost a necessity for humans, for if you try comparing seventy and infinity, a short in the logic circuits is virtually guaranteed. However, the fact remains that John 3:16 and John 5:24 and John 6:47 are in the Bible. And they, along with an abundance of other passages, promise that those who believe in Christ live forever—which, according to my dictionary means that it doesn't end.

Maybe the best we can do to understand eternity is to say that it is the amount of time it would take one person to live the lives of each of the four billion living humans one at a time. And then do it all again. And again. And again. . . .

But could it be that we're approaching this whole concept wrong? Perhaps eternity isn't a measure of time at all, but rather a state of being. This week's lesson may have some answers concerning this truly endless subject.

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
Passages in John on eternal life, such as 14:6, 17:3, and 5:24

A former *Collegiate Quarterly* associate editor, Rod Colburn teaches history at Walla Walla Valley Academy in Washington.

Eternal Life Now

LOGOS **Theme:** When we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we receive the gift of eternal life. We may be confident that we have eternal life the moment we receive Jesus, and that it remains ours as long as our connection with Him is maintained.

1. The Way to Eternal Life

"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life'" (John 14:6, NIV).

One of the great themes of the gospel of John, perhaps the central theme is how human beings may find *life*, life the way it is meant to be—rich, full, and eternal.

Through a variety of symbols and theological themes, John repeatedly declares that Jesus Christ not only is the way to that life, He is that life. And thus we may receive that life only by receiving Jesus. "God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:11, 12, NIV).

What does it mean to have life through the Son? Does it mean that eternal life is injected into us internally when we receive Jesus? Or does it mean that the merits of His life are credited to us so that we can be sure that we will enjoy eternal life when He returns?

2. The Essence of Eternal Life

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3, NIV).

The prospect of unending life is not necessarily inviting—it is crucial to know what that life consists of. The eternal life offered in John's gospel consists of sharing in the life of God Himself through a personal knowledge of Him.

William Barclay points out that the Greek word for eternal, *aionis*, "has to do, not so much with duration of life. . . . Its main meaning is *quality* of life. There is only one person to whom the word *aionis* can properly be applied and that is God. Eternal life is, therefore, nothing other than the life of God. To possess it, to enter it is to experience here and now something of the splendour, and the majesty, and the joy, and the peace, and the holiness which are characteristic of the life of God."¹

How would you characterize the "knowledge" that Jesus refers to in this passage? What do Old Testament passages like the following suggest about what it means to know God? Gen. 4:1; Exod. 6:6, 7; Psalm 46:10; Jer. 9:23, 24; 31:34; Isa. 51:7; Hos. 2:14-20; 6:1-13.

3. The Beginning of Eternal Life

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life'" (John 5:24, NIV).

Eternal life is not a vague promise for the hazy, distant future. It begins immediately for those who respond in faith to Jesus. We may "cross over" from death to life *now*.

Scholars refer to this truth as "realized" or "inaugurated" eschatology, and it is prominent in the gospel of John. The "last things" (eschatology)—eternal life, judgment, kingdom of God—are realized in Jesus Christ, the Savior, Judge, and King who has already appeared in history. In a sense He embodies those last things so that our relationship to *them* is determined in advance by our response to *Him* in the present.

Some scholars have taken the idea of realized eschatology too far and have minimized if not denied the reality of Christ's second coming and final judgment in the future. The very next verses in John (5:25-29) refute such a distorted view and make clear that eschatology will be "consummated" in the future when Christ returns bringing resurrection and judgment. Nonetheless, the gospel of John brings out the crucial truth that in the most fundamental sense, eschatology does not center on chronology but on a person, Jesus Christ, who is Himself the First and the *Last* (*eschatos*, Rev. 1:17).

In John 6 we find another dimension to the meaning of eternal life in the present through Jesus. Having declared His flesh to be the bread of heaven given for the life of the world, Jesus then said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54, NIV). Eternal life in the here and now is sustained through making Jesus—His humanity, teachings and death—our spiritual food.

J. Ramsey Michaels suggests that eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus also means identifying with the cross, where Jesus' flesh was broken and His blood spilled. "To eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood (v. 53) is not merely to partake of the benefits of Jesus' death but to participate *in the death itself* by becoming his servant and disciple. It is to follow him and (in one's own way) share his mission and destiny. The point is not that actual martyrdom is inevitable but that if a person is faithful it is always a distinct possibility (e.g., 13:36; 15:10-16:4; 21:18-19)." ² Paradoxically, we find life by sharing in Jesus' death (cf. Mark 8:35).

Since we pass from death to life now if we accept Jesus and we are condemned now if we reject Him (John 3:18), what need is there of a final judgment? (check 2 Tim. 4:7, 8; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:9; and Rev. 11:18 for possible clues).

4. The Assurance of Eternal Life

"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28, NIV).

Full assurance of eternal life now comes from the knowledge that we are held securely in the arms of the Good Shepherd, who knows His sheep intimately and sacrifices His life for them (vv. 11, 14).

Not even the prospect of death diminishes that assurance, for the Shepherd who holds us is also "the resurrection and the life" (see John 11:25, 26).

Earl Palmer, a well-known Presbyterian pastor and Bible expositor, provides helpful illumination of Jesus' statement that His sheep "will never perish":

"Jesus is not teaching that there is something instinctive within us that is indestructible, such as the Greek idea of an immortal soul which is trapped within the mortal prison of our flesh. . . . In such a case something about *me* is the basis of my hope. To be sure it is secret and mysterious, but still I in my mystical self am my own good news. In contrast to this, Jesus and his New Testament followers, are teaching a whole view of our nature. The gift of eternal life is essentially a relationship with the shepherd and the sheep—with us and the Lord. Therefore, it is eternal life for the whole self—body and soul. It is life seen as victory over death. Therefore, as this Gospel will make clear, the Christian hope is not a doctrine about our immortal soul but consists in our relationship with the good shepherd Jesus Christ, who does not lose his sheep—even in the valley of the shadow of death. The victory of that shepherd over death means that we will not ultimately perish. We are not the Gospel—Jesus is!"³

Does claiming full assurance of eternal life now generally lead to laxness in moral and ethical standards?

D.F.M.

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 207, 208.
2. J. Ramsey Michaels, *John* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1984), p. 101.
3. Earl F. Palmer, *The Intimate Gospel* (Waco: Word Books, 1978), pp. 99, 100.

Soul Food

"'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life.' Thorough the beloved John, who listened to these words, the Holy Spirit declared to the churches, 'This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life.' 1 John 5:11, 12. And Jesus said, 'I will raise him up at the last day.' Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours. Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.

"The people had referred Christ to the manna which their fathers ate in wilderness, as if the furnishing of that food was a greater miracle than Jesus performed; but He shows how meager was that gift when compared with the blessings He had come to bestow. The manna could sustain only this earthly existence; it did not prevent the approach of death, nor insure immortality; but the bread of heaven would nourish the soul into everlasting life. The Savior said, 'I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.' To this figure Christ now adds another. Only through dying could He impart life to men, and in the words that follow He points to His death as the means of salvation. He says, 'The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' . . .

"To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him. It is by beholding His love, by dwelling upon it, by drinking it in, that we are to become partakers of His nature. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. So Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Saviour. A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grace, must be assimilated. . . .

"Are you a follower of Christ? Then all that is written concerning the spiritual life is written for you, and may be attained through uniting yourself to Jesus. Is your zeal languishing? has your first love grown cold? Accept again of the proffered love of Christ. Eat of His flesh, drink of His blood, and you will become one with the Father and with the Son."

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 6:51

"What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul."

Excerpted from *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 388-390.

Eternal Life: Something We Can Relate To

by Ken Downing

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 17:20

Everything we learn in life is built on some other concept which we have learned previously. If what we have learned has been distorted, the new information that we are trying to assimilate will be distorted as well. Learning about eternal life follows the same pattern.

As children, our attempts to understand eternity were usually tied to concrete illustrations. We may have heard the story about the earth being a glob of sand. Once every year a crow comes, picks up one grain of sand and throws it into space. When the earth is gone, eternity will have just begun!

As adults, we have matured to the point where we are beginning to grasp that meaning in life has much more to do with our personal relationships than with what we possess. In fact, the angriest and most bitter descriptions of "hell" are saved by humans to describe bad relationships, while the loftiest language which rings of the celestial city is reserved for our happiest relationships. How often have you heard someone describe a date with the words, "It was heavenly," or speak of a bad marriage as "hell on earth"?

Consequently, if we are to understand the concept of eternal life, we must understand that it has to do with relationships, not with time. And if our human relationships have been negative, it will take relearning good relationships to learn how to relate to God.

John repeatedly asserts that eternal life is now because we relate *now* to Jesus who Himself is life eternal (John 5:39; 6:54, 68; 10:27, 28; 17:2, 3). But John also echoes the other gospel writers in helping us understand that we may only come to know Jesus as we develop a relationship with someone else who is experiencing that eternal life. In John 4:36 Jesus tells His disciples it is time to reap the harvest and gather "fruit for eternal life." They are to touch lives whose relationships are messed up just as He has touched the Samaritan woman living in sin after failing at five marriages. In John 17:2, 3 Jesus prays for His disciples to find eternal life in the Father and in Himself, but then He continues by praying for all who will find the same experience through those disciples as they extend the love they have received (John 17:20-26).

This theme is paralleled in Matthew's story (25:31-46) where the righteous who inherit eternal life (v. 46) are those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and visited the prisoners. And they do all this, incidentally, without even realizing that they have been relating to Jesus Himself all along.

Finally, in the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus (Luke 10:25-37) tells the skeptical lawyer that eternal life will be found only by loving both God and our neighbor.

In all the gospel accounts it appears that it is not only *possible* to enjoy eternal life in the present through a relationship with Jesus, but that it is imperative that we learn to enjoy transcendent, loving relationships on earth if we are ever to enjoy eternity in heaven.

"The loftiest language which rings of the celestial city is reserved for our happiest relationships."

Ken Downing is a graduate student in psychology at the University of Nebraska.

Choices for Life

Assurance of eternal life can make people do things that seem crazy. It can make 13-year-old Iranian boys heed the Ayatollah's call to join the *jihad* (holy war) against the satanic Iraqi foe. Donning their red "martyr bandanas" and shirts which say, "I have the special permission of the imam to enter heaven," they march into battle eager for martyrdom, confident that it is their ticket to paradise.¹

Before we get too carried away with deriding the Islamic fundamentalists for their bizarre extremism, though, we Christians should remember that *our* Lord and Master unequivocally declares that eternal life means laying down our earthly lives in His service.

"I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain, but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life will lose it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:24, 25, Jerusalem).

Jesus makes the same kind of shocking, radical demand as the Ayatollah. Yet, there is a difference. The Ayatollah seems to be asking his followers to give their lives in *destroying* life. Jesus asks us to lay down our lives by following Him (v. 26) in the way of *building up* life, no matter what the consequences to us.

We are not tempted to follow the Ayatollah. But our culture tells us that we find and hang onto life by accumulating wealth, using the people around us, and retaliating against our enemies. Jesus, on the other hand, says that it is in letting go of life by giving, serving and reconciling, that we find true life. The grain of wheat that dies produces a rich harvest.

Following Jesus in laying down our lives involves some specific choices. Among them:

1. Gaining or giving. Will the preoccupation of our lives be accumulating wealth and possessions for ourselves? Jesus said that anyone "who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33, NIV). Will we submit *all* that we acquire to Him, to be used not only for our own needs but to enrich the quality of life among those around us?

2. Using or serving. Will we see the people about us as objects for our use, be it for career advancement, sexual pleasure, or simple ego gratification? Or will we love them the way Jesus taught us to love, and see ourselves as their servants?

3. Retaliating or reconciling. We need to make a clear-cut choice between Rambo and Jesus Christ as models for relating to our enemies. Rambo (through action) says, "Annihilate your enemies" (or, at least let them know you can and will if need be). Jesus says, "Love them." Which will it be for us? And what will the implications of our choice be in a world gripped by aggression and militarism?

The wisdom of the world says choosing the way of Jesus is crazy. But what should be expected from those who have eternal life?

D.F.M.

HOW TO

Key text:
John 12:23-26

¹ *Newsweek*, March 21, 1983, p. 51.

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Eternity by Ken Downing

OPINION

Key text:
Revelation 21:2

It was a question that came up every year I taught Bible and one that was asked every year I was an academy student: "Is it really true that there is no marriage in heaven, that we will be like the angels?" The question had nothing to do with marriage, and little to do with heaven. Behind it was the lurking fear that if the Lord were to come before I got married and, uh, well, you know, I mean, uh, angels aren't like humans. . . .

We also stammer over the answer to that question and the account in Matthew 22:23-32 as we try both to keep our youth from premature marriages, and in the church, longing for the Lord to return. Unfortunately, the words of Jesus have been misconstrued in a way that has kept many from longing for the Lord's return and has created a distorted conception of God.

To understand why we have difficulty addressing the subject, it is helpful to review the nature of sin and what Satan, the fallen angel, does to distort our concept of God. Since sin is not original to the created order, the only "material" that Satan has to work with is goodness, truth, and beauty. In fact, sin is only a perversion of good in any form. Consequently, it seems logical to conclude that the devil will take what is most good, truthful, and beautiful to distort our image of God and keep us from desiring to spend an eternity with Him.

"The only

'material' that Satan has to work with is goodness, truth, and beauty."

In the Bible, the greatest truth about God's relationship with man is found in the person of Jesus, but the metaphor that is continually used is that of marriage. And when the Bible speaks of marital love, it uses sexual language to convey the ultimate truths about its goodness and beauty. The Song of Solomon is earthy, sensual language and though it is speaking about an actual love relationship between a man and a woman, it has rightfully been used as a metaphor of the relationship of God to His church.

In Hosea, that metaphor is personalized in the ultimate object lesson where a real prophet is told to marry a prostitute. When she leaves after bearing him three children and ultimately is sold as a slave for her debts, God commands the prophet to "Go again, love a woman who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress; even as the Lord loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods. . . ." (Hos. 3:1, RSV). In the authoritative work on biblical language, Gottfried Quell states simply that "when the imperative (ahab) occurs in Hos. 3:1 it is simply denoting the sexual act even if in an obviously euphemistic form."¹ And the beauty of that genuine, married love stands in stark contrast to the most degrading perversion of the act of marriage—selling the body without love or feeling for money.

It is in the act of marriage, where two people have, in the context of deep, Spirit-filled love, given themselves to each other totally in mind, spirit, and body, that we find the greatest illustration of what it means to transcend our earthly, time-limited existence and touch eternity. It is no wonder that the devil has taken that act and, more

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than any other good, tried to convince us that it is basically evil because of the way he has so skillfully perverted it. And in the family that the act of love creates we find the greatest evidence of the unity with individuality that God wants for His people.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis adds insight to this very idea when he has an elderly devil, Screwtape, advising his nephew on how to destroy his client, a young man on earth who is contemplating love in the midst of World War II. "Sex might have been, from our point of view, quite innocent. It might have been merely one more mode in which a stronger self preyed upon a weaker—as it is, indeed, among the spiders where the bride concludes her nuptials by eating her groom. But in the humans the Enemy [God] has gratuitously associated affection between the parties with sexual desire. He has also made the offspring dependent on the parents and given the parents an impulse to support it, thus producing the Family, which is like the organism, only worse; for the members are most distinct, yet also united in a more conscious and responsible way. The whole thing, in fact, turns out to be simply one more device for dragging in love."²

That love, the only condition for our relationship with God which is the substance of eternal life, is ours to enjoy in the here and now. And if that is the ultimate expression of what eternity will be like, it seems inconceivable to me that God would somehow remove that joy without, at the very least, substituting something of even infinitely greater joy and pleasure. Heaven is not something to be feared by the unmarried—it is the ultimate union of all that humans were made to be. It is, as it were, "the bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).

"In the act of marriage we find the greatest illustration of what it means to touch eternity."

REACT

1. Does the Bible's use of sex as a metaphor for our relationship with God change your outlook on heaven and the life to come?
2. What are the implications of the metaphor for our attitude toward sexuality in the here and now?

1. Gottfried Quell, in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), p. 23.
2. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1943), p. 67.

FOR EVERY NEED

“ I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing’ ” (John 15:5, RSV).



The Eternal Now

by Gerald Colvin

The old man lies quietly in his room at the end of the ward. A television drones in the lobby. His breathing is shallow and raspy. A mere shadow of his former self, he purses thin lips over toothless gums. He hasn't been shaved today. As in a dream, images of youth and loved ones flit across his consciousness. Somewhere deep within his once-lucid mind he pleads, O God! Take me home!

A squeaky cry escapes from a wad of brown wrapping paper thrown against the massive dumpster. A sanitation worker cocks his head. Something inside the red-stained paper moves. Perhaps an animal not yet dead, he thinks. But as he turns back to his task he hears again a faint squeak—or squeal! With nail-tipped stick he prods at the bundle until it falls open. He bends down to look. An unwashed, blood-smearred human infant blinks back at him, still grotesquely draped in birth matter, umbilical intact. "Dear God!" he exclaims.

Joe steps in silence toward the gas chamber. After ten long years of appeal he is at last to die for a crime he didn't commit. He wasn't totally innocent. He'd gotten in with the wrong crowd. And before he knew it he was participating in shoplifting, burglary, and finally armed robbery. But he *hadn't* gone the night Al shot the store clerk. He'd remained behind in his room, drinking. However, to gain freedom, one

of his "pals" turned state's evidence and framed him, claiming that Joe had slain the clerk! And now he must pay with his life for something he hadn't done. Thank God he'd had sufficient time on death row to find Jesus and surrender his life in baptism.

Human need—desperate and varied—is met by a Savior who uses a variety of metaphors to show how He meets those needs. He describes our relationship with Deity in such terms as "the shepherd and sheep," "the vine and its branches" and "a hen and her chicks gathered beneath her wings."

Paul Tillich provides yet another word-model of Jesus, this one inspired by Christ's statement to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). From this assertion he has dubbed Christ "The Eternal Now." Ah, I like that! The elderly may have fast-fading pasts and sleepy futures. Cast-away infants may have no past and precarious futures. Convicts may have sorry pasts and little hope for anything better than violent futures. *But Christ is present in each dimension—past, present, and future. They converge in Him to serve His purposes.* For the pitiful old man, for the unwanted infant, for the wrongly accused, for any and all of us, if we want Him to be, CHRIST IS ALWAYS PRESENT FOR US IN THE PRESENT! For He is the Great I AM. He is The Eternal Now.

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
John 6:35;
8:12, 58;
10:7, 11; 15:1-6

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LOGOS

Theme: Jesus used several metaphors to describe Himself, which enrich our understanding of His significance and His ability to meet every human need.

1. "Before Abraham was, I am" (read John 8:48-58)

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (8:58, NIV).

In this dispute with the Jewish leadership over His identity, Jesus made the boldest and most explicit claim He had yet made about His divine nature. He used the formula for self-disclosure which in the Old Testament is used by God alone: "I Am" (see Ex. 3:14; Isa. 41:4). This claim to be one with the eternal "I Am" is the foundation of all the other "I am . . ." statements we will study this week.

2. The Bread of Life (read John 6:25-35)

"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty'" (6:35, NIV).

In this, the first of the "I Am" statements, Jesus declares Himself to be the true satisfaction for the deepest human longings. What exactly did Jesus mean by calling Himself the "bread of life"? William Barclay offers this analysis: "(i) Bread sustains life. It is that without which life cannot go on. (ii) But what is life? Clearly by life is meant something far more than mere physical existence. What is this new spiritual meaning of life? (iii) Real life is the new relationship with God . . . of trust and obedience and love. . . . (iv) That relationship is made possible only by Jesus Christ. Apart from him no one can enter into it. (v) That is to say, without Jesus there may be existence, but not life. (vi) Therefore if Jesus is the essential of life, he may be described as the bread of life. The hunger of the human situation is ended when we know Christ and through him know God. The restless soul is at rest; the hungry heart is satisfied."¹

What was the difference between the "food that spoils" (6:27) and "the Bread of Life" (6:35) in the setting in which Jesus originally spoke the words (note especially vv. 14, 15, 26, 27, 51-53)? How would you compare and contrast the two in the setting of today's society?

3. The Light of the World

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" (John 8:12, NIV).

Jesus made this statement while at the Feast of Tabernacles, during which great lamps were kindled to commemorate the pillar of light that had guided the Israelites in the desert, and to point forward to the coming of the Messiah.²

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A light illuminates the darkness. Just so, Jesus brings light to a world in darkness. He brightens the recesses of error and reveals Truth. He overthrows the money changers of misconception, distortion, and uncomprehension in our minds and reveals gems of bright wisdom, of transcendent beauty, and holiness.

Does this verse imply that we receive the light of life only after making a commitment to following Jesus? Or does His illumination show us the way first, so we can make a choice about following?

4. The Gate for the Sheep (read John 10:1-10)

"Therefore Jesus said again, 'I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. . . . Whoever enters through me will be saved'" (John 10:7, 9, NIV).

Jesus is the gate through whom we enter a saving relationship with God. No one can come to the Father but by Jesus (John 14:6). In the sheepfold which Jesus enables us to enter, we find peace, safety and contentment, in contrast to the darkness, danger and despair looming on the outside.

What is the significance of the fact that through Jesus the sheep can freely go in and out of the sheepfold (see 10:9)?

5. The Good Shepherd (read John 10:11-21)

"I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep'" (10:11, NIV).

As we, the sheep, follow the Good Shepherd, we are led into green pastures beside still waters. Our life may be outwardly turbulent but within is the serenity of a sparkling, gently flowing stream of pure water, refreshing and clean. The Good Shepherd protects and guides us. We can trust Him in every exigency for He knows the way we go.

Reviewing John 10:1-21, identify as many benefits offered by the Good Shepherd as you can find.

6. The True Vine (read John 15:1-8)

"I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener'" (15:1, NIV).

In the natural world the vine, or stock, provides nourishment to the branches, both natural and grafted. Secondary but highly significant functions of the stock are to provide resistance against diseases and to afford protection from insects and worms which attack roots.

In the same manner, the young Christian who joins his life with the life of Jesus, finds sustenance, security and strength to resist the moods and ravages of sin.

How would you describe someone who is a fruitless branch? What does it mean to be a fruitful branch? (See also Gal. 5:19-23; Matt. 21:18-22.)

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1, Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 216.
2. See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 463, 464.

Gems From the Light

by William H. Taylor

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 8:12

All that God is—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—can be summed up in that awesome term, “I AM.” Some scholars think the expression came from the Hebrew verb “to be”; therefore, obviously, it is translated that way into English. It is difficult to get this concept across sometimes in grammar because at various times the verb means “being,” “the state of being,” “seems,” “becoming,” etc.¹

Such is the nature of God; His pre-existence, present existence, and future existence defy complete comprehension by mortal man. When Christ said, “Before Abraham was, I am,” he did not say “I was.” The meaning is clear: God exists, defying all human definitions, limitations, and concepts of time.

When we have difficulty defining something, we will sometimes say, “A rose is a rose is a rose . . .” The beauty of nature leaves us spellbound and tongue-tied; so it is with the beauty, the nature, and the character of God.

However, the metaphors Jesus used make the great “I Am” more comprehensible to us. They help us grasp what God can mean in our lives, even if we can’t fully understand His nature. One of the most crucial of these metaphors in the gospel of John is “light.”

“Every gem of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world.”

“God is light; and in the words, ‘I am the light of the world,’ Christ declared His oneness with God, and His relation to the whole human family. . . . As the sunbeams penetrate to the remotest corners of the earth, so does the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon every soul.

“ . . . The world has had its great teachers, men of giant intellect and wonderful research, men whose utterances have stimulated thought and opened to view vast fields of knowledge; and these men have been honored as guides and benefactors of their race. But there is One who stands higher than they. . . . We can trace the lives of the world’s great teachers as far back as human records extend; but the Light was before them. As the moon and the stars of the solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world’s great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gem of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world. In these days, we hear much about ‘higher education.’ The true ‘higher education’ is that imparted by Him ‘in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’ ”²

The character of God is transferred through Christ to us as we believe and serve Him. As we behold Christ, we are changed, and the Light of the world shines out through us. “We should not exclude ourselves from the world, for our Christian experience is to be the light of the world.”³

REACT

What implications does Ellen White’s statement on the relationship between Christ and the great thinkers of the world have for our own pursuit of “higher education”?

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1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 172.
2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 464, 465.
3. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 113.

When the Audience Turns Its Back

by Carol Fawcett-Smith

"It is always much more difficult to sing when the audience has turned its back."¹

In the seven great "I Am" sayings, we find the answer to who Jesus is. Jesus is the support of life; light in darkness; entrance into security and fellowship; guide and protector in life; certainty in perplexity; hope in death; and the source of vitality for a more abundant life.² Yet in spite of all His teachings, miracles and His perfect life, the "I Am" was continually rejected. The Singer was singing His song, but many refused to hear it.

Following several of the "I Am" discourses, Christ was met with rebuttals and denials. After He fed the multitude both spiritually and physically, the people came to Him seeking more signs. Jesus knew their motives and His response exposed their ambitious expectations. Jesus promised no hope of earthly rewards; instead, He offered Himself as their staff of life. Unwilling to feast upon divine food, the Jews argued in disbelief. Then many of Jesus' followers turned against Him and exclaimed, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" (John 6:60, NIV).

In the Temple, the Pharisees and rulers repudiated the notion that Christ could be an illumination to them. Blinded by their hatred, they were unable to comprehend His teachings. They accused Him of demon possession and charged Him with blasphemy. He eluded their attempts to stone Him, but this did not stop them from maliciously plotting to murder Him.

Yet Jesus handled their objections with steadfast love. He emphasized His relationship with the Father. His focus was always directed toward glorifying God the Father and not Himself. He referred to truths from Scripture and spoke in images common to His listeners' understanding.

Why was it so difficult for the Jews to accept Christ's teaching? "They were overcome by the revolutionary ideas and extreme requirements of the gospel, and they found the words of Jesus hard to understand, hard to accept, and hard to follow. Familiarity with the sayings of Jesus lead men to either overlook their stringency and their austerity, or to regard them too romantically or too wishfully. They do not always realize that at the bottom of every one are meanings that can change haters into lovers, keepers into givers, fools into sages, and losers into winners. Their reaction was not very much different from the reaction of the world today."³

How can the Singer continue to sing when so many turn their backs? What rejection Christ must endure! Yet there were always some who heard and believed and so again and again the Singer lifted up His voice and sang, "I Am Who I Am." Sing Lord Jesus, sing!

REACT

What kept the Jews from accepting Christ? How can we avoid falling into the same pattern?

EVIDENCE

Key text:
Exodus 3:14

"They were overcome by the extreme requirements of the gospel."

1. Calvin Miller, *The Singer* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975), p. 43.

2. Frank E. Gaebelstein, "The Gospel of John," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 1981, vol. 9, p. 76.

3. Albert McClellan, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1975), p. ix.

At the time of this writing Carol Fawcett-Smith was working in the division of religion at Southern College.

Life's Umbilical Cord

by Olson Perry

HOW TO
Key text:
John 15:4, 5

Until the recent development of self-contained backpack units, astronauts who walked in space were tethered to the spaceship by an "umbilical cord." Through the cord came the essentials for surviving and succeeding while walking in space, such as oxygen and electrical power for the space suit. While venturing alone into the forbidding emptiness of space, the astronaut would be constantly aware of his spacecraft, and that his existence depended on maintaining the lifeline.

We, too, must hold on to a lifeline—a constant umbilical cord—which connects us with Christ. It is the only means by which we can be strengthened to withstand the innumerable bombardments of the devil. At times we may think there is another source of nourishment. That is what the enemy would like us to think, but Christ tells us differently in declaring Himself to be the "I AM"—the bread, light, door, shepherd, and vine.

The astronaut's physical life was maintained through his lifeline, but the Christian needs to be concerned with more than the physical. Christ is the bread of eternal life. The nourishment, which gives eternal life, comes only through total immersion in Christ. He is of no value to us if we do not know Him as our personal Savior. A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into our hearts, so that His life becomes our life.

Jesus' statement, "I AM," declares His eternal presence. To me this represents a guarantee of the umbilical cord. The astronaut is confident in his lifeline because NASA's experiments, previous experience, and the quality of the equipment. The confidence we may have in our connection with Christ is based on His eternity. There never was a time He did not exist. He was there before the mountains, the heavens, the universe. And there is never a time when He will not exist. His eternal presence makes the most desirable guarantee possible.

As we receive our daily nourishment from Christ, we can endure the tests and trials of life and continue to develop spiritually as we move toward the ultimate goal of being like Him.

Such a relationship with Christ is possible if you:

1. **Know Him.** A relationship develops between two individuals through association. You must spend time talking with Him, and studying His word, daily.

2. **Place your life in His hands.** Gradually, by developing a relationship with Christ, you will place your life more and more fully under His guidance.

3. **Consult Him.** Some think of Christ only in regard to spiritual things, or when under life-threatening circumstances. But, He is also available in matters regarding a mate, career, family, and the entire host of personal problems.

4. **Share your life.** Your faith will grow as you tell others about what Christ has done for you.

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Therefore, I Am

by William M. Allen

All professors have standout students or experiences which punctuate their teaching experience. This fact was evident when William Wohlers, professor of history, presented slides on a recently completed European study tour to the Southern College faculty. The slides were accompanied by narration taken from the daily journal of a student, Deborah Fanselau. Toward the end of the tour she wrote, "I feel, therefore I am."

In these brief words Deborah expressed the heightened sense of feeling that she developed on the trip and equated it with an important aspect of being human. This increased awareness made her a more mature human than she had been at the beginning of the tour.

In the metaphors studied this week in the Gospel of John we find parallels. Consider the following slightly rearranged passages:

Alive before Abraham, therefore I Am.

The Bread of Life, therefore I Am.

The Good Shepherd, therefore I Am.

The Door of the Sheepfold, therefore I Am.

The True Vine, therefore I Am.

In these passages Jesus finds a way to express what it means to be divine.

Deborah, in writing "I feel, therefore I am," was exhibiting the result of education at its best. She had read the words of Descartes, "I think, therefore I am," and had interpreted them and given them added meaning. In modern terms we might say that Descartes (writing at the beginning of the Age of Reason) was exhibiting left brain dominance. In contrast, Deborah in her interpretations, is using the right brain to express feeling and emotion.¹

The words of Jesus reflect both dimensions of the brain. "I was alive before Abraham" is a direct factual (left brain) statement. In "I am the Good Shepherd," a sense of feeling and caring is expressed (right brain). Thus, in these expressions of divinity we find the thinking and feeling blended. The two dimensions of the brain are divine attributes which are shared with humanity. Both experiences which sharpen our ability to think and reason and activities which increase our sensitivity to other people enhance our humanity. In a balance between thinking and feeling we reach our full maturity as human beings and are drawn closer to God.

REACT

How can one cultivate a balance between "left brain" and "right brain" in one's knowledge of Christ?

OPINION

Key text:
Matthew 22:37

"I feel,
therefore
I am.' "

1. In this theory the left hemisphere of the brain functions primarily in the verbal, analytic, rational, abstract and logical modes. The right hemisphere operates mainly in the nonverbal, synthetic, nonrational, metaphorical and intuitive modes.

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THE MASTER'S FINAL LESSONS

“ ‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know you are my disciples if you love one another’ ” (John 13:34, 35, NIV).



Formula for Discipleship

by Robert R. Morrison

In one of those mystical sets of three, the Master, in his final discourse, taught a trio of transcendent lessons to His disciples—and to us His followers today. Each of these lessons might be summarized by the formula $P + C = H$.

Though only a few hours lay between Him and the agony of the cross, Jesus' major goal was to build within His disciples the desire and ability to follow His example. For effective Christian service, they would need strength, humility, hope, and unity.

They would need great endurance for the trials ahead. But that strength must be tempered by a willingness to serve others, to take the last place in line, to be unconcerned about rank and prestige. They would need the inner resource of hope for a hereafter of bliss in the presence of their Lord. But those hopes must, by remaining accurate reflections of God's Word and will, reflect

an essential Christian unity.

So it was that to accomplish His goal, the Master, in an unforgettable prayer, pleaded "that they may be one, even as we are one." He promised the disciples that He would return and take them with Him to the Father's house. And as a foundation for all this, He gave them the most memorable Passover experience of their lives; they watched in awe as the hands of the Creator, those hands that had formed Adam and Eve, now washed their dusty Galilean feet.

$P + C = H$. That **passover** supper, enhanced by the actions of **Christ**, brought a lesson in divine **humility**. Those comforting **promises**, undergirded by the faithfulness of **Christ**, offered reassuring **hope** to all Christians. And that incomparable **prayer** for unity, articulated by **Christ** the Son of God, means that one day there shall be peaceful **harmony** among His followers.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Scripture:
John 13—14

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Toward Service, Hope, and Unity

by Ron Springett

LOGOS

Theme: With the cross only hours away, Jesus graphically demonstrated for His disciples the humility and service that characterize His kingdom. He also gave them an abundance of powerful promises and prayed that not only they, but all believers might be unified and spiritually strong.

1. Passover and Predictions (read John 13:1-38)

"Jesus said to him, 'He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean. . . .'" (13:10, RSV).

This chapter begins the second main division of the gospel. Thus far John has given a narrative of Christ's ministry. He now goes on to set forth the issues or meaning of Christ's ministry. This second main division falls into three subdivisions: a) the inner glorification of Christ in His last discourses (ch. 13-17), b) the outer glorification of Christ in His passion (ch. 18-19), c) the victory completed in the resurrection (ch. 20).¹

Our lesson this week is concerned with the first subdivision only. Jesus has given His revelation to the world. Now He begins His final ministry to His own twelve disciples. Before Jesus begins His oral instruction He does two significant things.

First, He washes the disciples' feet. By so doing, Jesus, in contrast to the disciples' debate about who would be the greatest, demonstrated the meaning of love through humility. He was also prefiguring an even greater demonstration of love through humility—the cross.

The private act of Jesus in the presence of His disciples and the public act of the Son of Man on the cross were both acts of service and humility. Both were divine deeds which brought release from sin and provided an example to be imitated. Two points arise from this twofold significance: 1) through the work of Christ, God has cleansed a people for Himself, but sin remains possible (e.g. Judas); 2) the apostles imitate Christ and to the extent which they do they share His authority.²

Second, during the supper Jesus obliquely reveals the treachery of Judas. This treacherous act was successful, and might have shaken the faith of the disciples if it had taken them by surprise. By predicting it Jesus turns the very treachery of Judas into an aid to faith for his disciples.³

2. Promises and Precepts (read John 14:1 to 16:33)

"Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?'" Jesus answered him, *"If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him'"* (14:22, 23, RSV).

The words of Jesus in this passage are prompted by the fears and perhaps indignation of the disciples that having led them this far,

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He was now about to abandon them. He comforts His disciples for the last time prior to His death and promises them that despite His absence they will not be left alone in the world. "Let not your hearts be troubled" He begins, and continues by explaining to them that His departure is the preparation for a new beginning and not the end of it all. "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you" (14:18, RSV).

Jesus also emphasizes that belief in Him as One with the Father and love of Him and His word are crucial if the disciples, who will remain in the world after He leaves, are to preserve their relationship with Him. In fact, an essential criterion of discipleship is the close abiding in Him illustrated by the vine and its branches (15:1ff).

This vital relationship with Christ is all the more necessary in His absence because the believer's environment is the world which hates the good "without cause." "I have said all this to keep you from falling away" (16:1, RSV). It is as truly the nature of the world to hate as it is the nature of Christians to love. The persecution of Christians is due ultimately to the attitude of the world to God.⁴ Consequently, because the world by its attitude toward the church discloses its attitude to God, the world is judged by its attitude to the church. For in the church the ministry of Jesus is prolonged through the Spirit.

When we say the world is judged by its attitude to the church, what is meant by "world" and by "church"?

3. Prayer and Parting (read John 17:1-26)

"And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one" (17:11, RSV).

The prayer of Jesus extends from the disciples to all later generations of believers. In it He recounts His oneness with the Father, His faithful accomplishment of the task God committed to Him and makes a plea that God will now keep safe the believers. He prays for the sanctification of those believers through the truth or word of God. He envisions a succession of believers who will not know Him in the flesh. He prays for their unity, a unity stemming from their love for Him and for God. In this prayer as in major portions of this section of Scripture, Jesus reaffirms His unity with the Father and summarizes the results of His ministry. These are basically that the world failed to recognize God and His Son; but the believers did recognize the mission of Jesus from the Father. Because of this they have found, and will eternally find, knowledge and love.

Jesus seems to understand the world as divided into two classes, good and evil or believers and unbelievers. Is this now a rather simplistic way of viewing our complex modern world?

What does it mean for modern Christians to be "one"? One denomination, doctrinal unanimity, or something else?

1. A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. John*. Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 260.
2. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, an Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text. (London: SPCK, 1972), pp. 363, 364.
3. Plummer, p. 267.
4. Barrett, p. 403.

The M.B.P. Award

by Reed Christman

TESTIMONY

Key text:
Isaiah 60:1-3

Christians and non-Christians of all ages have asked the question, Does Christianity work? Does belief in the Lord Jesus Christ change human behavior? Can passions be controlled; attitudes and feelings changed? If so, how?

Ellen White's answer might be summarized in three words: minister, believe and pray.

Minister

"While they [the disciples] were contending for the highest place, He to whom every knee shall bow, He whom the angels of glory count it honor to serve, bowed down to wash the feet of those who called Him Lord. He washed the feet of His betrayer.

"In His life and lessons, Christ has given a perfect exemplification of the unselfish ministry which has its origin in God. God does not live for Himself. By creating the world, and by upholding all things, He is constantly ministering for others. . . . Jesus was given to stand at the head of humanity, that by His example He might teach what it means to minister. His whole life was under a law of service. He served all, ministered to all. Thus He lived the law of God, and by this example showed how we are to obey it."¹

"God did not design that His wonderful plan to redeem men should achieve only insignificant results."

Believe

"I [Jesus] go to the Father to co-operate with Him in your behalf. The object of Christ's departure was the opposite of what the disciples feared. It did not mean a final separation. He was going to prepare a place for them, that He might come again, and receive them unto Himself."²

"The Saviour's promise to His disciples is a promise to His church to the end of time. God did not design that His wonderful plan to redeem men should achieve only insignificant results. All who will go to work, trusting not in what they themselves can do, but in what God can do for and through them, will certainly realize the fulfillment of His promise."³

Pray

"He explained that the secret of their success would be in asking for strength and grace in His name. He would be present before the Father to make request for them. The prayer of the humble suppliant He presents as His own desire in that soul's behalf. Every sincere prayer is heard in heaven. It may not be fluently expressed; but if the heart is in it, it will ascend to the sanctuary where Jesus ministers, and He will present it to the Father without one awkward, stammering word, beautiful and fragrant with the incense of His own perfection.

"The path of sincerity and integrity is not a path free from obstruction, but in every difficulty we are to see a call to prayer."⁴

The recipient of the minister-believe-and-pray award receives eternal life and life more abundantly in the here and now.

Reed Christman is dean of men at Southern College.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 649.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 663.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 667.
4. *Ibid.*

Flag of the Upside-Down Kingdom

by Donald B. Kraybill

Jesus did not identify Himself with the existing religious parties and power structure in Palestine. He did not endorse the "realistic" Sadducees who cooperated extensively with the Roman occupation to preserve the sacred functions of the temple and their economic interests. There can be no question that He rejected the formal establishment of proper religion represented by the progressive Pharisees. He was not lured by a serene life in the desert in an Essene commune. He gave an emphatic and definitive NO to the righteous revolutionary violence of the Zealots. He rejected the symbols of these four strategies for dealing with Rome's domination. The temple, oral law, wilderness, and sword find little prominence in His kingdom. Although Jesus did not participate in any of these feasible political options, he did stay right in the middle of things. His in-the-middle-of things involvement was unusually upside down.

Every kingdom has a flag. This symbol represents the collective meanings of the kingdom and serves as a rallying point for loyalty and action. The symbols of the Upside-Down Kingdom are indeed upside down! They are certainly not the typical symbols which accompany a right-side-up king. The flags of this kingdom are a manger, stable, desert, donkey, thorns, basin, cross, and tomb. These are not the signs of successful kings. Such rulers are born in V.I.P. suites of prominent hospitals; they ride armored limousines, wear golden crowns, and receive international applause. But don't be mistaken. This Jesus is a King. He doesn't walk into Jerusalem on His feet. He rides in kingly fashion. His beast, however, is not the white stallion of a commander-in-chief; it's the poor man's donkey. He is a King but not a conventional one by any means. . . .

In the context of the Last Supper as His earthly ministry was about to conclude, Jesus hoisted the flag of His Upside-Down Kingdom:

"[Jesus] laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded" (John 13:4, 5). The towel and basin are the tools of the slave. This Upside-Down King uses the instruments of the servant. Instead of the typical powerful kingly symbols of sword, chariot, and white stallion Jesus reaches for the tools of service found at the bottom of the ladder. . . .

Walter Brueggemann has called the towel and the basin the tools and agents of shalom. They are not only symbols. They are the means by which something is actually done. The tools define our trade. We can only do the kind of thing for which we have tools. The towel and basin are slave tools which do the work no professional or competent master would do. These tools place us in the lower position, serve the other, and raise the other to the superior position. In this act Jesus is now turning the old social hierarchy upside down and exchanging it for a new one. For as the disciples all become servants and take turns washing each other's feet the whole distinction

EVIDENCE

Key text:

John 13:4, 5,

12-17

"This Upside-Down King uses the instruments of the servant."

Donald Kraybill teaches sociology at Elizabethtown College.

between master and servant fades. As all become servants to each other they are all simultaneously the greatest in the kingdom.

This is not the first time this King has gone down to the bottom. This King has been washing feet all His life. The towel and basin are fundamental symbols which represent what Jesus was all about. Jesus had been using the basin for three years, not like Pilate did to absolve himself of responsibility, not like the Pharisees did to exclude others. His basin was one of assertive love which took responsibility for others and included them in the flat kingdom. It was His basin work, in fact, which set the stage for the cross. . . .

We have already seen the shape of the basin ministry. Jesus spoke out forcefully against the rich who callously perpetuated their economic dominance of the poor. He healed and shelled grain on the Sabbath. He ate with sinners and tax collectors. He committed blasphemy by calling God His Father and by forgiving sins. He violated and condemned the oral law. He allowed a prostitute to touch and anoint Him. He traveled with women in public. He told parables which stung the religious leaders. He talked freely with Samaritans and Gentiles. He healed the sick. He blessed the helpless. He touched lepers. He entered the homes of pagans. He purged the sacred temple. He stirred up large crowds.

“He was quite aware that his deviant behavior would trigger His death.”

In almost every instance He was breaking informal and formal social rules created by the powerful religious authorities. He didn't make a fuss just for the sake of making a fuss. He actively and aggressively used the basin and towel to serve the poor and helpless regardless of the conventional social customs. He was quite aware that His deviant behavior would trigger his death. He knew full well that death was the prescribed punishment for some of His behavior. But the harassment from the authorities and the threat of death didn't stop His acts of love. Although He was not a violent revolutionary, His behavior was a political threat to the entrenched powers. The chief priests and Pharisees said, “If we let him go on thus, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation” (John 11:48). Many of the charges at His trial were false. But there can be no question that in the minds of the Jewish leaders His new teaching and acting threatened the false sense of peace in Palestine. The Romans considered any source of instability a political threat to their control of Palestine. So they executed Him as a political insurrectionist and hung the tag “King of the Jews” on His cross.

At the end of the foot washing in the upper room Jesus instructed His disciples to do likewise: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14, 15). This is an invitation to enter the basin ministry with Jesus. He certainly is suggesting more than a twice-a-year ceremonial ritual. His example was a life of service. He extends an invitation to enter the basin trade full time. The Gospels make it

clear that the disciple is called to follow the Master by doing the work of the kingdom. This is not a kingdom of saints on rocking chairs pondering the mystery of God's salvation. This is a kingdom of basin people. The word and event become one in Jesus Christ. The Word became flesh and lived among us. The disciple incarnates the Word by acting in the name of Christ. Words without acts are empty. Acts are powerful authenticators of the Word.

The greatest disciples in the kingdom are the ones who *do* and teach the commandments (Matthew 5:19). "Not everyone who says, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does* the will of my Father" (Matthew 7:21). The sheep and goats are separated at the judgment on the basis of their acts of clothing, feeding, visiting, and welcoming (Matthew 25:1-46). The family of God is made up of the ones who *do* His will (Mark 3:35). The one who hears and *does* the words of Jesus is compared to a wise man. "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not *do* what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46). The lawyer is told that he will live if he *does* the Great Commandment (Luke 10:28). After the Good Samaritan story we are instructed to go and *do* likewise (Luke 10:37). In parabolic form Jesus tells us that the servant who knows his master's will, but doesn't *do* it, will receive a severe beating (Luke 12:47). This call to an active basin ministry permeates the Gospels. We are asked to sell, give, love, forgive, lend, teach, serve, and go. There is only one caution. An aggressive basin ministry will likely result in a cross.

**"He extends
an invitation
to enter
the basin
trade
full time."**

REACT

What significance does "the basin" of Jesus have for your life and that of your church? What "crosses" might we face by engaging in basin ministry?

Excerpted from *The Upside-Down Kingdom* by Donald B. Kraybill, pp. 291-296. Copyright 1978 by Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA.

A Link With Home

by Frances Andrews

HOW TO

Key text:

John 17:20, 21

Recently I observed a remarkable ceremony on a college campus. All of the "foreign" students met for a dedication service to send the American student missionaries on their way to work in the lands from which the foreign students had come. Each foreign student repeated John 14:1-3 in his own language. The service became especially poignant to me when I realized the homesickness these students must have felt having been away for so long. That homesickness is a feeling all Christians can relate to in a sense. We have all been in a "foreign land" for a long time, separated from our true home.

While we await the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to take us there, we can maintain a link with our heavenly home through prayer. In John 17 we find a prayer of Jesus that is a worthy model for our own prayers. He concludes the final meeting with his disciples before the cross by praying:

1. for himself—John 17:1-5
2. for his disciples—John 17:6-19
3. for all believers—John 17:20-26

We, too, should pray:

1. For ourselves. Each morning, we should pray, "Lord, please govern my actions this day and make me a blessing to others." We should submit to Him specific areas of need, whether it be a tough course, a character flaw, or a messed-up relationship. Our desire should not just be for "solutions," but primarily that the Spirit of Christ enable us and control us in every situation.

2. For our friends. When our friends face trials, opportunities, or temptations, one of the best things we can do is bring them to the Lord in prayer. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer has said, "Spiritual love will speak to Christ about a brother more than to a brother about Christ."¹

It may be a prayer for an everyday struggle: "Dear Lord, Sue is really having a rough time with algebra. Please help her as she takes her test today." Or it may be about a deeper problem: "John seems to be drinking more and more, Lord. Please give him the wisdom and courage to get the help he needs to overcome this problem."

3. For our fellow believers around the world. If we know of individuals in distant places with particular needs, we should pray for them by name. "Dear Lord, be with Diane today. She is a nurse in the hospital in Taiwan and she needs your help today. May she reflect your character to her patients and fellow workers." We should also pray for the church in a corporate sense—its teachers, its institutions and overall spiritual well-being.

Praise God for prayer, a link to our heavenly home that keeps the homesickness from overwhelming us.

REACT

Why should we pray for others? Does it somehow cause God to do something that He wouldn't do anyway?

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1954), p. 36.

Frances Andrews is an associate professor of journalism at Southern College.

Who Is Greatest?

by J. Bruce Ashton

Something there is about us that does not love to serve. Is it because society assumes that the servant is inferior to the served? Historically men have compelled service from other men. Somehow those who were strong enough to intimidate, or wealthy enough to "own", supposed themselves to be better, higher on the social ladder.

Suppose my two-year-old wants to go out and play in the sandbox. With neither the height nor the strength to turn the knob and open the door, he depends on someone taller and stronger to serve him. It would be a sad state of affairs if he could intimidate me into letting him out, and in no monetary sense does he own me. But only a very petty spirit would make me resent opening the door for him.

True service is offered by the greater to the lesser. I read recently of a Capuchin monkey trained (as are Seeing Eye dogs for the blind) to be hands and feet for a quadriplegic. Physically, the monkey is the greater, having agility and muscular control. In fact, only its ability to do what the person cannot do enables it to serve at all.

This week's lesson dramatically portrays the superiority of the servant. Here is Christ washing feet, something which the disciples (at least within their social conventions) could not very well do for themselves (never mind that they could have done it for each other!). In the process, He symbolizes their cleansing from sin, which no one else could do for them at all. Here is Christ extending promises from a loving Father, to whom the disciples have access only through Christ. Here is Christ praying for men too sleepy to pray for themselves, men who understood neither their need of prayer nor what they should pray for.

Christ was busy with a stupendous undertaking—the restoring of damaged, flawed beings to their original "very good-ness." Devastatingly exhausted by shouldering their world's guilt Himself, He nevertheless extends service the most menial (footwashing), the most sublime (introducing them to the Holy Spirit), and the most ardent and selfless (praying on their behalf).

When Jesus said, "The servant is not greater than his master," was He simply recognizing the world's twisted sense of values? Not really. Is the healthy monkey thereby emotionally, intellectually, or morally superior to the disabled human? I, the stronger man, serve the child because I cherish the higher values of its affection, creativity, and power of choice. Even so, Christ saw in me, despite my dirty feet, my stupefied mind, and my estrangement from the Father, an individual worth serving, even at the expense of His own dignity, His own comfort, His own life.

For this I am grateful. For this I am willing to serve.

REACT

Can servanthood lead to a sinful sense of superiority on our part? If so, how might this be avoided?

OPINION

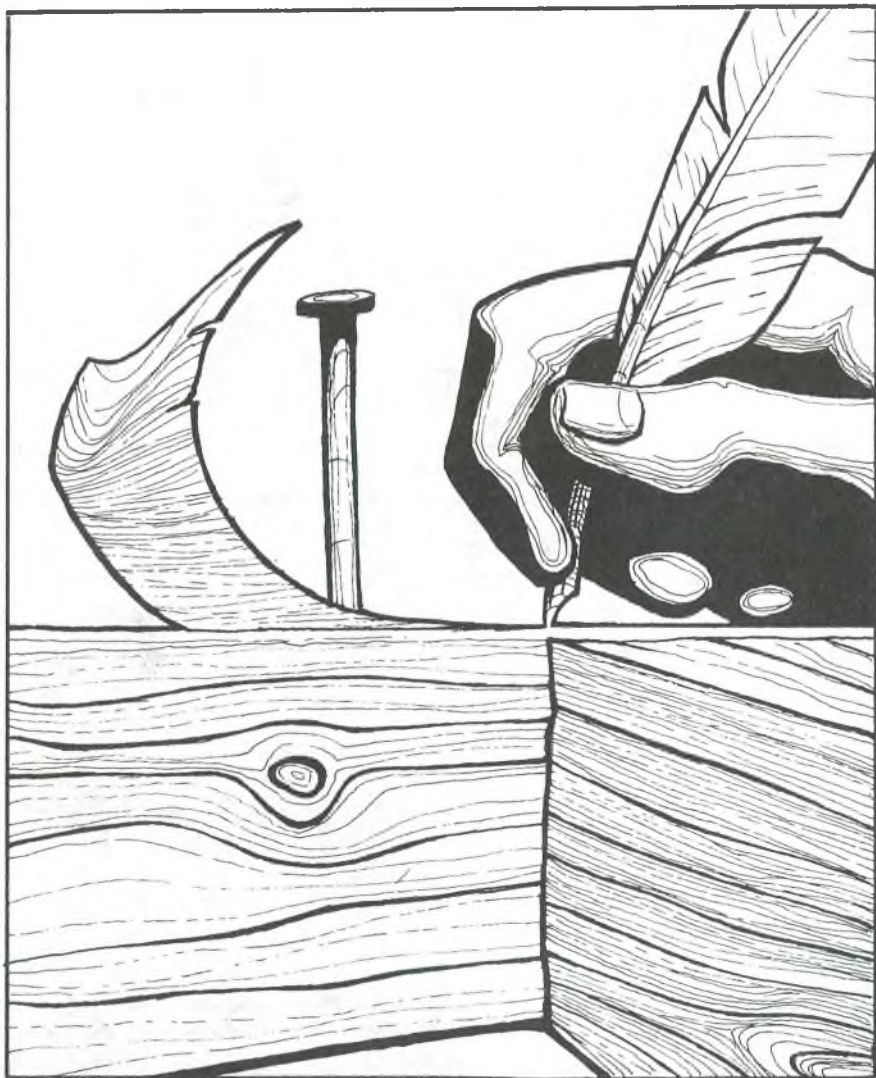
Key text:
Matthew 18:1-4

"True service is offered by the greater to the lesser."

J. Bruce Ashton is a professor of music at Southern College; his one-time two-year-olds are now teenagers.

DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE

“ ‘I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me’ ” (John 6:38, NIV).



Two Bills?

by Gordon Bietz

Once upon a time in New York City there lived a man named Bill. He was a very kind, gentle person who was greatly loved by all of his neighbors.

Each day when Bill came home from work, the kids in the neighborhood would be waiting for him. He would tell them stories, play with them, and since there wasn't a lot of natural beauty where they lived, he would occasionally take a few of them out to see the hills and forests outside of New York. Little children liked to have Bill swing them around like a merry-go-round and they would beg him to do it again and again until he was tired and it seemed that their little arms would stretch.

The whole neighborhood seemed happy when Bill was there. The adults also liked to have Bill around for he would always be the one they called on to help start a car, move a sofa, or just talk over a problem. He was always going out of his way to help someone.

During the day Bill was a lawyer working for a large firm in the city. Many people came to him so he had developed a very large caseload. All who knew him knew they would get honest, effective representation from Bill. He would often take cases for people who couldn't pay. In fact he did that more often than the policy of the law firm allowed.

Another man, named Sam, who worked for the same law firm, became jealous of all the work and attention that Bill was getting and so he began to undermine Bill's work. When someone would not get all he wanted in some legal settlement arranged by Bill, Sam would say, "I could have gotten you more!" When there was some problem in the office Sam would always point the finger at Bill.

Others around the office were also jealous of Bill and so they too began to criticize the way he did things. It didn't take long for Bill's reputation to get quite spoiled at work. People passed the word that Bill was not a good lawyer, and that he took poor clients because that is all who would come to him.

All of this hurt Bill very much, but Sam didn't let up. Sam reported to the IRS that Bill was cheating on his income tax. An IRS agent began checking on Bill by interviewing people who knew him. The agent discovered what appeared to be two Bills: the Bill known by his neighbors and the Bill that was reported by those who worked with him.

Finally the IRS agent interviewed Bill himself and Bill said, "If you have seen the Bill in my neighborhood, then you have seen the true character of the Bill at work."

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
John 1:18;
5:19, 30;
6:38;
14:8-10;
15:1-5

Gordon Bietz is pastor of the Collegedale SDA church at Southern College.

Jesus the Revelator

by Rod Colburn

LOGOS

Theme: Jesus was the supreme revelation of God the Father's character. That revelation flowed from Jesus' relationship of dependence on the Father, which is the paradigm for our relationship to Jesus.

1. Like Father Like Son

"No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (John 1:18, NIV).

"Philip said 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.'

"Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you for such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"?' " (John 14:8, 9 NIV).

Among the most vital of purposes for which Christ came into this world was to demonstrate the character of God. Until then He had been heard only in the thundering cloud above Sinai, seen only in the glory enshrouding the temple, and felt only in the fury of conquering armies. But now people saw Him in living, breathing, three-dimensional detail—and didn't realize it was Him.

Some perceived dimly His divinity, but few recognized Him as the incarnation of Yahweh. Even Philip, a daily companion for nearly three years, was unable to see through the clothing of humanity and asked his ill-advised question. In defense of Philip, he desired nothing more than had been granted Moses (Ex. 24:10) or Isaiah (Isa. 6:1)—namely a direct vision of the Father—so he could be absolutely convinced by the irrefutable evidence of the senses. But the question reveals a serious misunderstanding of Christ and His mission. Because Christ lived in perpetual union of purpose with the Father, His words were the Father's words, and His actions the Father's actions. Unbeknown to Philip and his colleagues, they had seen the Father—perfectly demonstrated by his Son.

In Your God is Too Small, J. B. Phillips discusses various common concepts of God, such as "resident policeman," "grand old man," "heavenly bosom," "God-in-a-box" and "managing director." How does the picture of God in Jesus compare with the picture these titles (or any others you might think of) suggest?

2. Dependence on the Father (read John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 14:10)

"For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me" (6:38, NIV).

The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is a fascinating study. A golden example of cooperation and willing subservience, the relationship attests to the perfect wisdom of divine order. Given that members of the Trinity are equal, human understanding might assume a degree of rivalry and confusion to exist in the Godhead. But absolute unity and the acknowledgement of the

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Father as "first among equals" erases any such possibilities and creates an ideal command structure. The Son yields His will to the Father and the Father is expressed through the Son (John 14:10).

Christ's denial of acting upon His own will in 6:38 does not suggest a discrepancy between the wills of the Father and the Son, but rather illustrates the chain of command and underscores the degree of unity between them: Christ has surrendered his will to the Father. "In all that he does he is subject to his Father and totally dependent on his Father's power and love."¹

How did Jesus exercise His dependence on the Father (see Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12)? Why was it necessary for Him to be dependent, even though He was divine (see Heb. 2:17, Phil. 2:5-11)?

3. Dependence on the Son (read 15:1-5)

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (15:5, NIV).

The mutual indwelling of Father and Son is the model for the relationship between Christ and us. Just as Jesus was totally dependent on the Father for power and direction, so we are to be totally dependent on Christ. "Unwillingness, through a proud sense of self-sufficiency, to draw spiritual strength of Jesus, or to submit to the discipline which alone makes possible the flow of this vitalizing power, renders the so-called believer a dead branch unable to bear fruit. There is no permanent place for him in the fellowship of the redeemed and Jesus asserts that his destiny is as surely determined as that of a withered branch which is removed from the tree and burned. . . . On the other hand, when the believer relies completely and continuously upon his Saviour and is obedient to His commands, then the life of Jesus inevitably flows into his life, so that he can truly say with Paul 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. 2:20)."²

1. J. Ramsey Michaels, *John, A Good News Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), p. 73.

2. R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 175.

God's Thought Made Audible

by Jack Blanco

TESTIMONY What is God like?

Key text:
John 17:3

The light of the knowledge of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. And by coming to dwell with us, Jesus made God's innermost thoughts both audible and visible. It is through Jesus that the Father's life flows out in love to everyone and it is through Him that it returns again in a tide of love to the Father. Thus through the Son the circuit of beneficence is complete, revealing the character of the Great Giver and the Great Law of Life by which he governs His great universe.¹

What does oneness mean?

Jesus was so willingly submissive to the Father, so voluntarily dependent on the Father's power, and so emptied of selfish interests, that He eagerly accepted His Father's plans for His life. Consequently day by day the Father would guide him and unfold his plans for Him. And when the time came for Christ to attend His last Pass-over, He turned toward Jerusalem, pressing toward the place of sacrifice with eager steps. In His heart was the peace of perfect oneness with the Father.²

How can we be one with God?

When the love of our God leads us to seek the Father's glory, as Jesus did, and not our own, then we can know that our impulses are the same as those which beat in the heart of Christ and we are one with Him. "Father, glorify Thy name through Me," Jesus prayed. This was the keynote of His life and this will be the keynote of ours when we are one with Him. Zeal to spread the truth about our God is a motive implanted in the heart of every sincere believer by the Holy Spirit.³

REACT

1. What were the thoughts of God which Jesus made so audible?
2. What, to you, are the three most important tangible ways we should be seeking the Father's glory today, thus showing our oneness with Him?

1. See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19-21.

2. See *Ibid.*, pp. 208, 547.

3. See *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 409.

For additional study, see

Steps to Christ, pp. 9-15

on Christ's revelation of

the Father; *The Desire*

of Ages, pp. 829-835 on

Christ's attachment to

the Father; and *The Desire*

of Ages, pp. 547-551 on

what it means to be one

with Christ.

Jack Blanco is a professor of religion at Southern College.

A Gospel of Paradox

by Benjamin McArthur

The Christian message is based on paradox: the first shall be last; he that loses his life shall find it; the death of one brings salvation to many; the wisdom of the world is made foolish. If we extended the list we would certainly include what is perhaps the central paradox of the Christian faith: the teaching that we become fully human, fully realized, only when we become dependent on another, namely Christ (see John 15:4).

This teaching seems the most problematic, for it defies the basic human urge for autonomy. Though humanity has always sought independence, either as individuals or as groups, we of the twentieth century find the call to dependence particularly difficult. Beginning with the Renaissance, Western civilization has contained an increasingly prominent strand of thought that exalts the individual. Some of the most famous political documents in the Western tradition embody the notion of individual fulfillment. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson put the individual pursuit of happiness at the core of social life. And the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the central political statement of the French Revolution, set forth a similarly individualistic ethic. Much good, of course, has come from the contemporary liberation movements that are the heirs of the great Enlightenment documents. Yet in one sense personal autonomy (which is certainly among the most influential values of our age) is simply a modern manifestation of that age-old sin called pride. The conviction that we need be dependent on no one else—that is pride, and it is the opposite of all Christ taught.

We need not rely only on Jesus' teachings to learn of our dependency on God. The very conduct of His life provides a direct model for us. "I can do nothing on my own authority," Jesus told his listeners, "I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 5:30, RSV). This is a strange confession coming from the Creator of the world, one who would seem able to act immediately on his own authority. But it is yet another example of the paradoxical logic of Christianity, a further testimony to the difficult lesson that greatness resides in humility, position in service, authority in submission.

Christ's declaration of dependence harmonizes with a fundamental fact of human nature: that we are social creatures not intended for independent existence. Our web of dependence extends upwardly to God as well as outwardly to other people. "One can acquire anything in solitude except character," observed Stendhal, which a Christian might paraphrase, "One can acquire anything without God except life itself."

REACT

Is the dependency of humanity on God a result of sin, or would it also exist in a perfect world?

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 15:1-11

"Personal autonomy is simply a modern manifestation of that age-old sin called pride."

Benjamin McArthur teaches history at Southern College.

You Can Succeed

by Dennis Negron

HOW TO

Key text:
Philippians 4:13

The Savior's life attests to the fact that it is possible to accomplish total dependence. The Gospels show that Jesus, in strengthening His relationship with His Father, did nothing that we aren't able to do.

Analogies to illustrate this truth, although imperfect, may be taken from the world of sports. Superstars like Julius Erving, Walter Payton, and Dale Murphy may have been born with outstanding physical attributes, but to succeed, each one needed a spirit to learn, to observe, to communicate, and to practice. By adopting these same qualities, we may accomplish the same type of relationship with Christ as Christ had with the Father.

To succeed spiritually, then, cultivate a spirit to:

1. Learn. Very rarely is successful learning accomplished with a half-hearted attitude. The student of sports must want to excel in order to do well. The Christian must want to learn to depend on Christ in order to do so. Jesus' childhood must have been filled with episodes such as the one where He went to the temple as a boy of twelve. His yearning to learn made His own life successful.

2. Observe. The truism "By beholding, we become changed" has more validity to it than many people believe. In the world of baseball, the best pitchers will say that they have studied other good pitchers and also the hitters. Through their observation, they have learned what is needed to improve their games. The way to observe Jesus is to study the Bible. Christ's life is always fascinating no matter how many times you read it. And when you continue to observe the biblical account of Christ, you learn how Christ depended upon His Father and how He, too, was thoroughly immersed in Scripture (see for example Matt. 5:1-11; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; John 5:19).

3. Communicate. One may learn some things from a book with no trouble at all, but there is no substitute for direct communication with the experts. Cal Ripken, Jr., one of the better shortstops in baseball, credits part of his success to the day he received some timely advice from future Hall of Famer, Reggie Jackson. By communicating with the Expert, you can also get advice and strength for depending on Him. When Christ walked on the water, His reason for not going on the boat trip with the disciples in the first place was so that He could talk to His Father (Mark 6:46).

4. Practice. Reading and communicating with the experts is worthless if you don't put to practice the advice. You can't let fear of failure prevent you from acting, either. The difference between an outstanding player and a mediocre one is that the outstanding one can put his mistakes in the past. Every failure is part of his "practice." You should expect some failures while attempting to depend on Christ. But Christ invites you to forget about your failures and to continue to read, pray, and practice depending on Him.

REACT

Is it really possible for sinful humans to accomplish total dependence on Christ?

At the time of this writing, Dennis Negron was a senior theology and English major, and editor of the campus/student newspaper at Southern College.

94 Thursday, September 4

Who's Your Daddy?

by Jack McClarty

Last week my son asked, "Daddy, isn't *anything* made in the United States?" I had just pointed out the nearby oil tanker flying a foreign flag. Then he had noticed the words "Made in Japan" on the back of his wrist watch. Sitting next to him on the car seat was a part marked "Hong Kong."

"Yes, Son, we Americans, as independent and advanced as we are in so many ways, still find ourselves dependent economically, if not politically, upon other countries of the world. In turn, these countries are also just as dependent—if not more so—upon the U.S."

So what if anything do the dependencies of one nation on another have to say to us spiritually? What can we learn about our dependence on Christ from the mutual dependence and political networkings of modern nations?

Not much, except by contrast. For instance, with Jesus there is no jockeying for power, for God is forever supreme. Unlike the alliances among today's countries, Jesus' loyalty to us is genuine, unconditional, and never-changing. He breaks no treaties, never rejects a dependent relationship because of nationality or economic status. And Jesus helps us constantly, simply because He is divine, and we are dependent upon Him, whether or not we acknowledge it.

So if politics today have little symbolic worth concerning an ideal, dependent relationship with Jesus, what does? How then shall we comprehend what to do? Clue: We should ask ourselves what Jesus' relationship to God the Father was while Jesus was here on earth. Therein lies the perfect analogy, the worthy metaphor.

Jesus reflected God perfectly. The cynic has quipped, "If you don't walk like your daddy, think like your daddy, or behave like your daddy, chances are that you are mistaken about who is your daddy!" And so a perfect relationship with Jesus, a *saving* dependence on *Him* will ultimately exhibit itself in our lives. We will attempt to treat other humans in as loving, as caring, and as sympathetic a manner as Jesus did.

And one more way that earthly national dependencies do not resemble a human-divine one: which nation reigns supreme is of the moment, of just transitory significance; but whether or not we humans develop a saving dependence is of *eternal* consequence. And what can be more important than something that lasts forever?

OPINION

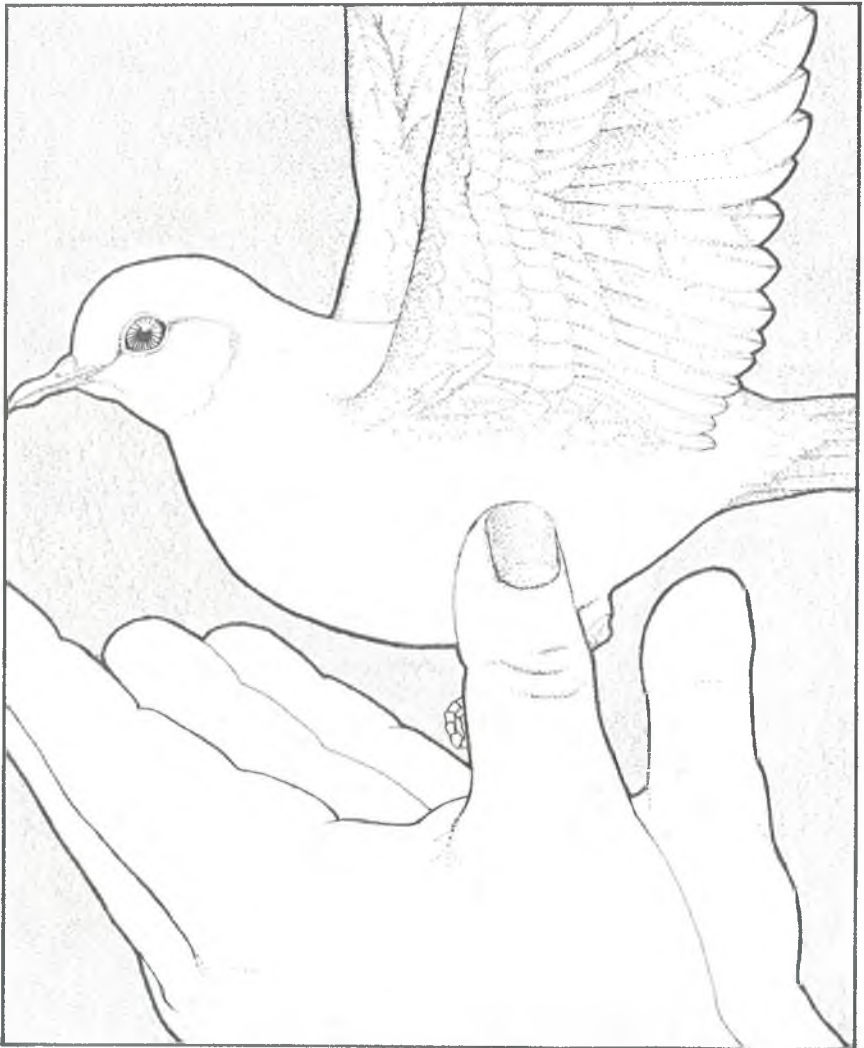
Key text:
Philippians
2:5-11

"Jesus' loyalty to us is genuine, unconditional, and never-changing."

Jack McClarty is vice-president for alumni and development at Southern College.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

“ ‘But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth’ ” (John 16:13, NIV).



The Sign at Greenwich Village

by L. W. Williams

It was past midnight. Few people were on the dingy New York subway as it screeched to a stop at the Greenwich Village exit. I got off and there it was—dead ahead, a huge sign hung on the wall, half covered with graffiti as only New Yorkers can write graffiti. The three-foot high letters were still clearly visible. The three word message hit me like a thunderbolt and began to burn into my consciousness—God is love, God is love, God is love, God is love. When I got back to my room over and over it went, reverberating through my mind long into the early morning hours. Finally, sobbing, I slid over the side of the bed and onto my knees. From that time to this, life has had a distinctly different quality about it. Oh, sure there have been ups and downs, rough times and good times, joys and sorrows; but it has never been the same. God loves me no matter what! That is now a constant awareness.

I had gotten off at that same Greenwich Village exit many times before. I had looked at that same sign many times before. That night, what was different?

Jesus promised that the "Comforter" or "Counselor" "the one called along side"¹ would lead us into all truth (John 16:13). To me, this Holy Spirit element was what made the difference on that night

years ago. It still makes the difference today.

Please close your eyes for a moment. Try to focus in your mind's eye a mental picture of the Holy Spirit. . . .

What do you come up with? If you are like me, you are having some difficulty in picturing Him . . . or is it Her, or It? Have you ever said, "When I get to heaven I want to have a talk with the Holy Spirit?" God the Son, most likely; God the Father, probably; but God the Holy Spirit?

The Bible gives us some clues about the physical appearance of the Father (Ex. 33:22, 23; Isa. 6:1-5; Dan. 7:9) and the Son (Rev. 1:12-16), but not the Holy Spirit. The functions are given but not a physical description. Yet Ellen White indicates that the Holy Spirit has a distinct personality.²

Certainly, our tendency to have a hazy mental picture of the Holy Spirit should not cause us to undervalue the importance of this third person of the Godhead: "The Holy Spirit is the breath of spiritual life in the soul. The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ. It imbues the receiver with the attributes of Christ."³

The need is clear—to be Holy Spirit-filled. We may not be altogether sure what that means, but let us seek a clearer picture as we study this week.

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
John 14:16, 27;
15:26; 16:7-14

L. W. Williams teaches social work and sociology at Southern College.

1. *SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 485.
2. See *Evangelism*, p. 617.
3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 805.

What Was New?

by Gordon M. Hyde

LOGOS Theme: Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit, the "Counselor," who, as God's presence in the world, would witness to Jesus, bring conviction and guide believers into all truth.

This week, rather than studying the Scripture passages section by section, please study the Scripture outline below in its entirety. Then, read the commentary, which covers all the passages.

1. The Blessing of the Spirit's Presence

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16, 17a, NIV; cf. 16:7).

2. The Holy Spirit Focuses Us on Jesus

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26, NIV; cf. 15:26; 14:10).

3. The Holy Spirit Brings Conviction

"When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sins because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of the world now stands condemned" (John 16:8-11, NIV).

4. The Holy Spirit Guides Us Into All Truth

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13, NIV).

When a leader knows his hours are numbered and that his followers have so much to learn about him and themselves, those hours are jealously guarded. Christ chose an upper room, a paschal supper and talk that ran into the night.

How could He leave them, sheep among wolves? How blind they were to His previous warnings of what was only hours away!

But Christ was creative. He solved problems. He had solutions—perfect solutions. He had something new to offer. But how new? New in kind? Or new in degree? He will explain.

"I am soon going to be forced to leave you. My time here is up. Stage two of my work is ready to go. But look, I have something better for you than if I were to stay.

"My Father will give you another counselor. Not as a stop-gap, but 'to be with you forever' (John 14:16). The new Counselor, who has actually been in the world as long as I have—from the beginning—is going to come with all the power that my sacrifice for you will make possible (John 16:7). But when He comes, it may not seem that something new has happened. That is because His supreme de-

Gordon M. Hyde is chairman of the division of religion at Southern College.

light will be in testifying 'about me' (John 15:26, 16:14).

"So, please don't be frightened when I say I must leave you (John 14:27). We are just carrying out the foretold details of God's plan to save this world. I know you feel helpless and confused just now. But don't worry. The Counselor will help you understand all truth. He will help you understand what is happening and why (John 16:13). But some of His work will be unwelcome—convincing the world of its guilt, showing what is right, and reminding that all must be judged before God (John 16:8-11).

"Please don't be upset. I know what you will be going through. But the Counselor will be very close. *In* you, as a matter of fact. Everywhere, anytime, endowed with new power, the power of my certain resurrection. Not so much new, as in different, but new in degree. And that's new!"

Why did the disciples need "another counselor" (see especially 16:10, 33; 15:18-20)? What needs did the counselor fulfill for them? For us?

Parakletos, the term translated "counselor" by the NIV is also translated Comforter, Advocate, and Helper, and in a variety of other ways. According to F. F. Bruce it denotes "one who is called alongside as a helper or defender, a friend at court." Which translation seems more appropriate to you? Explain.

Does the Holy Spirit guide us to a point where we can claim to have all truth?

The Spirit of Truth

selected by John Wagner

TESTIMONY A Friend in Every Circumstance

Key text:
John 16:7

"By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. . . .
"At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer."¹

Bringer of Truth and Transformation

"His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. . . .

"It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church."²

"It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought by the world's Redeemer."

Outpourer of Grace

"What was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost? The glad tidings of a risen Saviour were carried to the uttermost parts of the inhabited world. As the disciples proclaimed the message of redeeming grace, hearts yielded to the power of the message. The church beheld converts flocking to her from all directions. Backsliders were reconverted. . . . One interest prevailed; one subject of emulation swallowed up all others. The ambition of the believers was to reveal the likeness of Christ's character, and to labor for the enlargement of His kingdom."³

A Vitalizing Presence

"If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit. Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. . . . For the daily baptism of the Spirit, every worker should offer his petition to God. . . . The presence of the Spirit with God's workers will give the proclamation of truth a power that not all the honor or glory of the world could give."⁴

REACT

Do you see signs of the Spirit's presence in the church today? Do you see indications of a lack of His presence? Is it possible to measure the degree of the Spirit's activity?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 669, 670.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 671.

3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 48.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 51.

John Wagner was the president of Southern College at the time of this writing.

Monuments

by Floyd Greenleaf

"The evil that men do," Mark Antony says in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, "lives after them. The good is oft interred with their bones." Given the conditions, it was a clever line for Mark Antony, but it is not necessarily a truism. We usually remember people for what they have done, good or bad.

In a manner of speaking, whatever the dead leave is part of them, an expression of what they were when alive. For example, Michelangelo remains with us in his marble statue of David, Monet is still here in his impressionist oils, and Beethoven lives on in his powerful symphonies. The list could go on—perpetual flames for San Martin in Buenos Aires, statues in France honoring Napoleon, a shrine for this one, a memorial for that one.

All of these things are monuments, in a sense, because they preserve something of the spirit of the persons themselves. What would happen if we removed Abraham Lincoln from his memorial in Washington, replacing him with Babe Ruth? There the King of Swat would sit, in exquisitely polished marble, pensively staring at the floor, contemplating his next home run. Ridiculous. Why? Because his life and the monument don't fit together. The monument would be an artistic obscenity. Babe Ruth would never have wanted it that way.

If we turn it around and put the Lincoln Memorial in Yankee Stadium, it would be more ridiculous, almost irreverent. For Abraham Lincoln, there is little about the monument that we could improve because everything about him—his life, his accomplishments, and his place in American history—speak out from his glistening shrine at the west end of the reflecting pool.

Jesus was concerned about what He would leave behind. He had repeatedly told His disciples that He was soon to go. They did not fully understand, but they were saddened because they were losing a close companion.

I'm going to leave you something to remember me by, Jesus seemed to be saying. It is something that will capture the spirit of My life. It will exude My presence. It will speak about Me. It will remind you of the things I have told you. There are many things about Me that you don't comprehend yet, even though we have been together for a long time. What I leave you will eventually reveal to you all of the truth about Me that you are not conscious of now. You can't miss it when it comes. You will recognize it because it will be like Me. It will counsel you and be your guide, just as I have been. I am not saying this just to make you feel good. I *am* the Truth. What I leave you will be as good as I Myself. It—He, really—is the Spirit of Truth.

No, the evil that people do does not always live on in spite of the good they have done. Good persons make sure they leave good monuments. Just as we know Michelangelo, Monet, and Beethoven from what they left behind, we also know Jesus. That Perfect Person lives on in His perfect monument, His very Spirit.

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 15:26

"Good persons make sure they leave good monuments."

Floyd Greenleaf is a professor of history at Southern College.

Finding Freedom

by Millie Runyan

HOW TO
Key text:
John 14:16

Recently two young college women came to me one Friday evening wanting to talk about their spirituality. They said, "We want to be good Christians, but it is so hard. We know we could never do it if we did decide to try."

As I pondered their comments, I became concerned. Why did accepting Christ seem so difficult for them? Perhaps to them, the focus of religion had been on "don'ts" rather than on the privilege and rewards that come from integrating Christ into one's lifestyle.

Knowing Christ is to know the One who is Truth. And John 8:32 says that knowing the Truth makes us free. The freedom Christ gives is the ability to love ourselves as well as others, to grow in our relationship with Him and in relationships with each other.

Adventist Christians have often limited the idea of Truth by attaching a unique meaning to the word. We often refer to conversion to our church as "coming into the Truth," and speak of our religious traditions as "having the Truth." As a child, I thought the Truth was not attending the theater, studying the Sabbath School lesson seven times, and possessing a well-marked Bible. While all of these things remained important to me, I have discovered Truth to be much greater than all my doings. Christ says, "I am the Truth." And when we open ourselves to Christ, the Holy Spirit integrates Truth into our lives. Our spiritual goals become attainable through cooperation with the Spirit. We experience the freedom Truth brings, rather than struggling under a legalistic burden. One way of cooperating with the Spirit of Truth is to make a daily inventory of our spiritual condition by following these steps:

1. Find a challenge for each day. Challenge yourself to make a change in your life that will bring excitement into your spiritual growth. Be specific and make your challenge for one day only.

2. List three goals each day that will help you meet your challenge. Make them positive, realistic and nurturing to your spirituality.

3. Recognize the good points about yourself. Be specific. As sons and daughters of Christ, we are endowed with many desirable traits. Loving one's self is vital to giving love to others, which is a necessary ingredient for the Christian.

4. Give praise for goals accomplished and for challenges fulfilled. This can be in the form of a prayer, naming those people or occasions in your life for which you are thankful.

If you are one of those who is fearful that your goals for Christian living are unattainable, keep in mind that Christ accepts you just as you are. But you do not have to stay where you are, you can grow. We have a pattern of Truth in Jesus and the Spirit to activate His Truth in our lives.

REACT

Why is the Spirit of Truth liberating? How would you describe the freedom Truth brings?

Millie Runyan is the dean of women at Southern College.

Provision of the Spirit

by Jeanette Stepanske

Thoughts, choked with feelings, tumbled one over another as my husband, Bruce, and I listened to the doctor's words. Behind the wide, double doors, Doug, our nineteen-year-old son, lay frighteningly still, a victim of a dirt bike accident.

"No!" my mind screamed, "You don't lose a son from a broken leg!"

The doctor continued the conference. Systematically he described the deteriorating conditions, the medical options, the selected treatments and the failure of Doug's body to respond. Nothing more could be done. Did we want to see Doug?

"No!" I almost shouted. "I can't watch my son die!" The room was silent. "Can Doug hear us, will he know we are there?" I asked.

"Yes," the nurse responded. "Doug can hear, he can understand, but he can't respond."

"Give us a few minutes alone."

Repressed sobs wrenched the air as the door closed and Bruce and I faced each other, alone, unable to move from our chairs. The seconds ticked by as our very souls exploded in uncontrollable grief. Then suddenly we both knew this was not the time for our grief, that would come later. Now was the time to bring comfort and peace to Doug.

We agreed that Doug's last hours should be a positive time, free from panic, filled with caring voices and pleasant memories. A strange feeling of peace enveloped us as we planned our strategy.

Each of our short and frequent visits would begin and end with a positive prayer, thanking God for His love and peace. Then, taking turns, each of us would recall the funny, personal experiences our family had shared through the years. When grief wrought one of us speechless, the other would continue the dialogue.

All our energy flowed into these brief visits, leaving us incapable of reaching out to family and friends. However, the Holy Spirit, our personal Comforter, our personal Advocate, knew our every need.

Friends suddenly appeared, making phone calls, arranging transportation, food, rooms, and prayer groups. Within hours our loved ones were by our side. All across the country friends and strangers were praying; individual prayers, group prayers, prayer chains and continuous prayers. Bruce and I were comforted.

The Holy Spirit, working through others, provided freedom. Freedom to concentrate on our son. Freedom to remember the good times. Freedom to share God's love with Doug. Regardless of the outcome we knew the Holy Spirit would be eagerly waiting—waiting to be called in—to impress our minds with good decisions, to bring peace during our darkest days, to send comfort and help, to fulfill every need. Yes, the Holy Spirit is our personal Comforter, our personal Advocate, the Provider of personal freedom.

God chose to intervene in Doug's life. He miraculously recovered and is currently a student at Southern College.

OPINION

Key text:
2 Corinthians
3:17

"The Holy Spirit is our personal Comforter, our personal Advocate, the Provider of personal freedom."

Jeanette Stepanske is an associate professor of education at Southern College.

Where the Counselor Comes

by Frederick Buechner

SUPPLE- MENT

Key Texts:

Psalm 74:1-16;
John 16:7, 8

According to the Book of Kings, it was "in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon" that the Babylonian forces entered Jerusalem and, among other things, destroyed the great Temple of Solomon in all its glory. "At the upper entrance they hacked the wooden trellis with axes," says the Seventy-fourth Psalm, "all its carved wood they broke down with hatchets and hammers. They set thy sanctuary on fire." You can all but hear the chaos and din of it—the falling masonry and splintering wood, the massive cedar beams overlaid with gold thundering to the floor, the crackle and hiss of flames as they swept up the walls all carved with pomegranates, palm trees, lilies, as they feathered with fire the great olive-wood cherubim with their outstretched wings. Who can ever forget it—the burning embers floating through the sky and the terrible heat of it as the priests scattered before it like dead leaves before the wind?

"The temple fell
to the
Babylonians
like a
house of cards
not because
God was a
pushover
but because
a house of
cards was what
God's people
had made of it."

There are many things you could say about it, and one of them is simply that King Nebuchadnezzar put King Yahweh to rout and took his Temple the way Grant took Richmond. You could say that when it came to a direct confrontation, not even God in his holiness was a match for Babylonians in their might with their hatchets and axes and flaming torches. You could say, if you dared to say it, that God is only a dream, a shadow, a word, whereas hatchets are solid and real the way Babylonians and bombs are real; and that on the day when this whole planet is finally chopped down, burned up, the dream of God will vanish with it as surely as the Temple did on the fifth day of the seventh month with King Nebuchadnezzar standing by at the hotline to get the good news. That is one thing you could say, and my own guess is that there were probably more than a few in Jerusalem who were saying it in 586 B.C. just as there are more than a few who are saying it today. Nebuchadnezzar routed God because God is of no substance and reality in himself, and thus eminently routable. Nebuchadnezzar was able to dispose of God and his Temple, both, with comparative ease because God, if he had ever existed at all, was dead and gone before Nebuchadnezzar got there.

But needless to say, that was not what the prophets were saying. What the prophets were saying was that the reason Nebuchadnezzar was able to destroy the Temple of God in all its holiness was that God had long since left the Temple to its fate in anger and despair and taken his holiness with him. The prophet Jeremiah went and stood right in the court of the Temple itself on the eve of its destruction and said it—in the terrible candor of his calling—blurted it out with such force that his eyes bulged in their sockets: "Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord.'" He shouted it three times in a row so nobody would miss it. And then he spoke what he believed was the word of God himself: "Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, . . . go after other gods . . . and then come before

Frederick Buechner (pronounced Beekner) is a Presbyterian minister and critically acclaimed author.

me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered?'" For Jeremiah, in other words, the Temple fell to the Babylonians like a house of cards not because God was a pushover but because a house of cards was what God's people had made of it.

"We are delivered," they said in their Temple while it was still in business. They had been delivered at the Exodus and many a time since. They had left behind them in Egypt the worst bondage of all which was bondage to themselves. They had been shown the way . . . out, but they were still in hell because by letting their faith become mainly a matter of ritual and busyness inside the Temple and by living their lives outside the Temple as though there was no God at all to give a hang how they lived them and thus was really no God at all, hell was what they had made for themselves and within themselves. It was they themselves who had desecrated the Temple, Jeremiah said, and the Babylonians had only delivered the coup de grâce. Now they were on their own. God was no longer to be found where for centuries they had expected to find him. And the Seventy-fourth Psalm begins like a dog howling at the moon: "O God, why dost thou cast us off for ever? . . . Remember thy congregation, which thou hast gotten of old." But as far as the Psalmist can tell, God did not remember them. "We do not see our signs," he says. "There is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long." That was the worst of it all. The people of the Exodus, the people who had been delivered, were lost, and their cry is a cry of dereliction that even after two and a half thousand years has still such a ring of reality to it that it is hard to hear it and remain unmoved, hard to think of it as having a mere historical interest. "O God, why dost thou cast us off?" Is there anyone who has not only heard that cry but at times also cried it?

There is a restaurant in a city somewhere, a sort of quick-lunch place with no tablecloths on the tables, just the ketchup and mustard jars on the bare wood. It seems to be raining outside. An elderly man with a raincoat and umbrella has turned at the door. Another man glances up as he sits there smoking a cigar over a newspaper and the remains of his coffee. Two teenagers sit at a table, one of them with a cigarette in his mouth. They are all looking at the same thing, which is an old woman and a small boy who are sharing a table with the teenagers. Their heads are bowed. They are saying grace. The people watching them watch with dazed fascination. The small boy's ears stick out from his head like the handles of a jug. The old woman's eyes are closed, her hair untidy under a hat that has seen better days. The people are watching something that you feel they may have been a part of once but are part of no longer. Through the plate-glass window and the rain, the city looks dim, monotonous, industrial. The old woman and the boy are saying grace there, and for a moment the silence in the place is fathomless. The watchers are watching something that they've all but forgotten and will probably forget again as soon as the moment passes. They

"The old woman and the boy are saying grace there, and for a moment the silence in the place is fathomless."

could be watching creatures from another planet. The old woman and the boy in their old-fashioned clothes, praying their old-fashioned prayer, are leftovers from a day that has long since ceased to be.

It is not fashionable to praise Norman Rockwell overmuch, that old master of nostalgia and American corn, but we have to praise him at least for this most haunting and maybe most enduring of all his *Saturday Evening Post* covers which touches on something that I think touches us all. It was some thirty years ago that he painted it, but the likeness remains fresh and true to this day, and of course it is a likeness of us and of a world not unlike the one the Seventy-fourth Psalm describes.

For us the Temple still stands, to be sure. The great cathedrals still stand. The churches still stand, big ones and little ones, some that are almost full every Sunday and others that are almost empty. The Church is still in business, in other words, but the question is, what is that business, what goes on in these strange buildings scattered thick over the surface of the earth? Why do people continue to go there? What do they find when they get there? What do they fail to find? Why do people go to them no longer? Fundamentalists, liberals, evangelicals, humanists, charismatics, Roman Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses—are all of them doing the same thing or are they doing different things? Are some of them doing it right and others doing it wrong? Is there any sense in which you can say that God is present in any of them or all of them? These are not rhetorical questions, questions whose answers I plan to pull out of the hat at the end of my sermon. It's because I don't know the answers that I'm asking them both of you and of myself. And it's because some of you may share my confusion and uncertainty that it seems crucial to ask them also of God. Maybe at least part of our business in a church is to ask what is going on in it. Is there anything more or less important, real, holy, going on there than anywhere else?

“Maybe at least part of our business in a church is to ask what is going on in it.”

As a church we have not been demolished with hatchets and axes and torches, and the foes of God have not roared in our sanctuary except insofar as from time to time you and I are his foes. The church is intact. The plumbing and furnace work, at least most of the time. The Sunday School rooms are clean and adequately lit. The bills are paid. The ministers by and large earn their keep. Sermons are preached, the young are baptized and married, the old buried. The sick and lonely are visited, and the poor remembered, and the congregation more or less does its share too. The wine is poured and the bread eaten over and over again. “Drink this, eat this, in remembrance of me,” and he is remembered here, and we come to remember and be remembered. We pray. We worship. Sometimes we even open our hearts a little to the one who promises to lead us out, to deliver us, and who has delivered us at least as far as this place itself where with such faith as we have, we sometimes yearn above all things for full deliverance and sometimes, I suspect,

would turn it down cold if the chance came because with part of ourselves we cling to things as they are even when they are killing us and we are far from eager to find out what full deliverance might mean.

Is it possible that something crucial is missing the way something crucial was missing in the Temple at Jerusalem in 586 B.C., which is why it fell like a ton of bricks? "You are the body of Christ," Paul said, and if you stop to think of it at all, that is a most fateful and devastating word. Christ on this earth was the healer of the sick, the feeder of the hungry, the hope of the hopeless, the sinners' friend, and thank God for that because that means he is also our hope, our friend. Thank God for every time the church remembers that and acts out of that.

But Christ was also a tiger, the denouncer of a narrow and loveless piety, the scourge of the merely moral, the enemy of every religious tradition of his day, no matter how sacred, that did not serve the Kingdom as he saw it and embodied it in all its wildness and beauty. Where he was, passion was, life was. To be near him was to catch life from him the way sails catch the wind. He was the Prince of Peace, and when he said, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword," what he presumably meant was that it was not peacefulness and passivity that he came to bring but that high and life-breathing peace that burns at the hearts only of those who are willing to do battle, as he did battle, to bring to pass God's loving, healing, forgiving will for the world and all its people.

In these ways too the church is called, you and I are called, to be Christ's body, to be life-givers, and when I think of that, I think of a New England college where I preach from time to time in a vast Gothic chapel that is used only once or twice a year and the rest of the time stands empty. And I remember how the last time I was there and looked out into all that great vaulted space which month after month is full of nothing but shadows, it struck me as saying much of what the Rockwell cover is saying. The other people in the restaurant look with dazed astonishment at the old woman and the small boy at their prayers because something seems to be alive and real inside them in that unlikely place, something that in many a place where you would expect to find it seems scarcely alive at all. Even when churches are full to overflowing, it is often hard not to sense an inner emptiness as great as the emptiness of that college chapel—the sense that though the great feast is still in progress and many of the guests still in their seats, the heart has somehow gone out of it, the passion, the adventure have been replaced by shadows, and the host himself no longer there.

Is that the truth of it—the church as museum, as echo? Many would say so. In the part of the world where I come from, the people who say so are apt to be some of the wisest, most concerned people there are. They have little or nothing to do with the church because for them the church speaks a dead language, is for them a dead-end

"But Christ was also a tiger, the denouncer of a narrow and loveless piety, the scourge of the merely moral."

street. And if we are honest, you and I—we who are the church and try to hold on to whatever there is to hold on to in it—I think we have to admit that often they are right. Often, I'm afraid, the church is a place where preachers preach not out of their depths but out of their shallows, and who, when they try to show forth the great transforming truths of the faith that once set the world on its ear, speak not out of the experience of those truths in their own lives but speak instead like American tourists abroad who believe that if only they say the hallowed old words often enough and forcibly enough, everybody will be bound to understand whether they know the language or not. Often, I'm afraid, the church is a place where bread and wine and prayers and hymns and worship have little more significance than the secret rites of a Greek-letter fraternity. Sadder still, the church often seems to be a gathering of men and women who, whatever they find there, take so little of it out into the world with them that if one of them were to sit down at McDonald's and say grace, or say or do anything to suggest he or she is a Christian, the golden arches would shake with astonishment—and so, I suspect, would we. I think of an organization like Alcoholics Anonymous, which has no building, no budget, no priesthood, but only people who come together wherever they are to seek help in their helplessness from each other and from God and who are ready at any ungodly moment of day or night—which is to say, of course, at any godly moment—to go to each other's rescue, whereas you and I, who are called above all things to be Christs to each other, tend to pass like ships in the night. In our own genteel and unobtrusive ways will we "steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, go after other gods, and then come before [him] into this house which is called by [his] name and say, 'We are delivered?'" The one who asks that question is Jeremiah, and there can be no great mystery as to whom he asks it of.

"The church is destroyed not just from without but by people like you and me who destroy it from within with our deadness and staleness."

God is the Lord and giver of life. If the word *God* means anything that matters, something like that is what it means. Life-giver. Light-giver. God as giver of love that is both the peace that passes all understanding and a tiger in the blood, the one whom we hunger for even when all our words about God start to bore us to death. Is God in the Temple not just as a shadow, a word, but to give life to us where we are dead or dying, love to us where we are loveless and lost? Because if God is not to be found in the Temple, then maybe it is better that the Temple should be destroyed altogether so we can look for him where maybe he is to be found.

Each of us has an Exodus to remember. For each of us a journey has begun. "We are delivered," we say, and yes, somewhere, somehow that is part of the truth of us. But we are also derelict. That is the other part. We have seen just enough of the day to know that it is night. "We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet," the Psalmist says. There is only that odd pair in that shabby restaurant. "And there is none among us who knows how long," the Psalm-

ist says—night as the absence of God where we look for God to be present. But then the Psalmist speaks a word which of all his words to us is the most precious. "And yet," he says. And yet. "Thine is the day, thine also is the night."

"Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." That is what Jeremiah said, who predicted the destruction of the Temple. "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." That is what Jesus said, who predicted his own destruction.

There is nothing the world can't destroy if it puts its mind to it, including the world itself. The Temple of Solomon was destroyed as much by the Jews within as by the Babylonians without. And the church as the body of Christ is destroyed not just from without by a world that sees it as a dead-end street but by people like you and me who destroy it from within by our deadness and staleness, our failure to be brave, to be human, to take chances; by the sterility and irrelevance and superficiality and faddishness of so much of our churchly business and by our tragic-comic failure to move around in the world as though being a Christian makes not just a nominal difference but all the difference in the world. But if the Temple can be destroyed, and maybe deserves to be destroyed, God is not destroyed, Jeremiah says. Even if the Temple lies in ruins, God will find a new place to pitch his tent, and that place is the human heart: the law to be put within us, the Counselor to come, the breath of life.

Which hearts and where then? In whose hearts does something of God well up, something of new life start to live? I think of the Catholic bishops with their statements about nuclear disarmament. I think of the peace movement which it's easy enough to be critical about but which begins to make sisters and brothers even of enemies by trumpeting into the night that the achievement of no good we desire and the defeat of no evil we fear is worth the price of holocaust. I think of Alcoholics Anonymous, with their churchless church. And I think of that old woman and that small boy again, and of every old boy and small woman anywhere who for Christ's sake are willing to look like fools, who in some small and improbable way remind the rest of us of that simplicity and passion and outlandishness of faith without which no Temple, no church, is worth two cents, and to lose which, for you and me, is to lose our own souls.

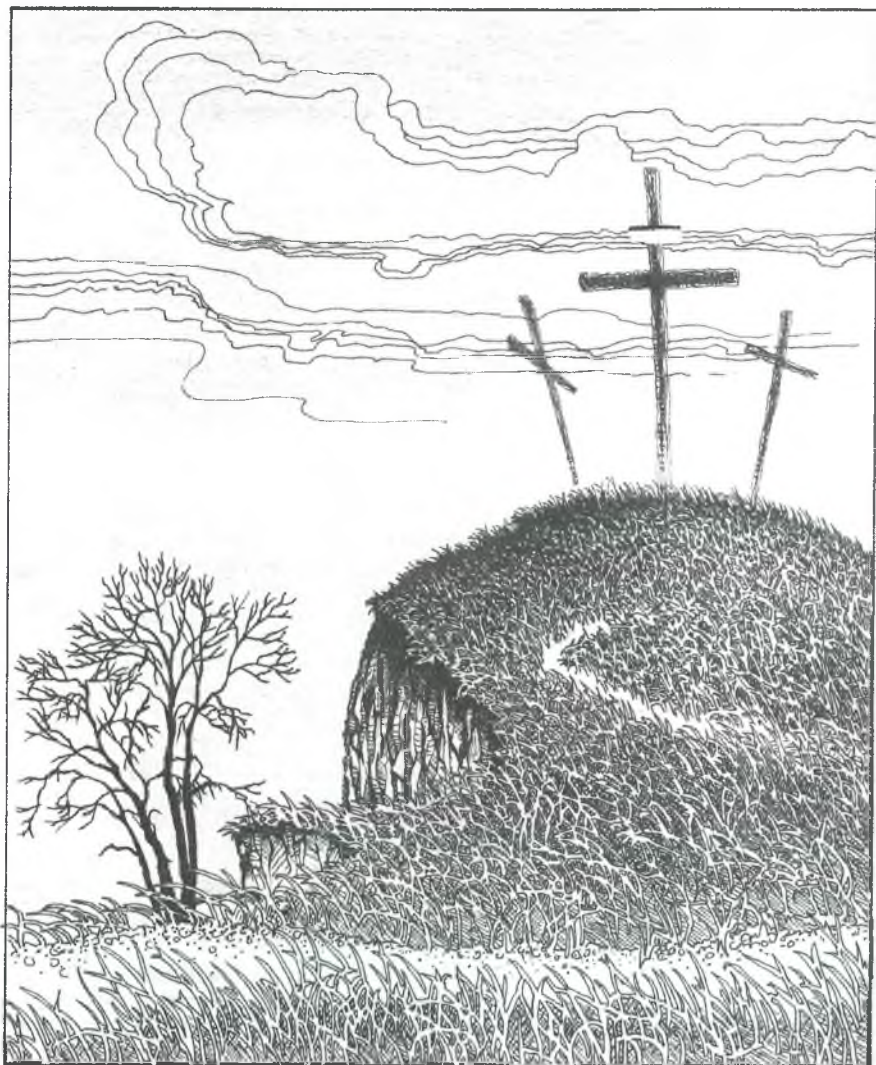
Sisters and brothers, we must love one another or die. Surer than the law of gravity is sure, that is the law. And in those hearts where that law is written and kept, there the Counselor has come and God dwells, and the world itself begins to become the Temple. "O God, direct thy steps to the perpetual ruins" that can never ruin thee. Direct thy steps to us and to thy church in its emptiness and darkness. Thine is the day, but thine also is the night. Thine also is the night.

"In those hearts where the law is written and kept, there the Counselor has come and God dwells, and the world itself begins to become the Temple."

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THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

“ ‘Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself’ ” (John 12:31, 32, NIV).



The Bull, the Lamb, and Us

by Jan C. Haluska

A bullring is a cruel place. The animal charges again and again, goaded by spears, barbs, and the smell of its own blood. Finally the matador stands, sword in hand. There will be no more delays now. One will die. The Spaniards call that "the moment of truth."

The picture which we find in chapters 18 and 19 of John's gospel is of exactly such a moment. After repeatedly failing to make Him stop His ministry, Jesus' enemies determined that the time had arrived for final action. They filled their hands with weapons and came to Him.

We need to consider carefully exactly what they found waiting for them. Not a bull—symbolic of hatred and menace—but a Lamb whose first thought was for healing an enemy's severed ear (a wound which some of us might have cheered for), and whose next act was to ensure the safety of His followers. That murderous crowd was blind to the truth of the One whom they were attacking.

Pilate's cynical question un-

derscores the blindness that engulfed them all. "What is truth?" he asked, and completely unaware that the answer lay in the events of that very moment, he cut himself off from the answer by striding out of the room.

But before we judge Pilate too harshly, we should ask ourselves the hard question: what about our own moments of truth? We sin daily, do we not? We therefore crucify Christ again and again. The darkness which so engulfed Jesus' attackers needs to be dispelled in our experience so we can see clear reality. The terrible truth of this moment—of each moment—is that our swords are sharpened for our own throats except as His grace persuades us to be like Him. If we will allow Him to make us into healers and protectors instead of assassins, we will be able to rejoice with Him in resurrection. If not, we will be walking away in the footsteps of blinded Pilate: cynical, detached, and doomed. The moment of truth, as always, is now.

**INTRO-
DUCTION**
Scripture:
John 18 and 19

Jan C. Haluska is an associate professor of English at Southern College.

“Behold Your King!”

by Jerry A. Gladson

LOGOS Theme: Arrest, trial and crucifixion culminate Jesus' life of self-giving and redemptive love.

1. The Betrayal and Arrest in Gethsemane (read John 18:1-12)

“Sheathe your sword. This is the cup my Father has given me; shall I not drink it?” (18:11, NEB).

Despite the chaotic events of that Thursday evening in Gethsemane, John accents Jesus' calm control over what happened. Because of His divine insight, Jesus takes the initiative in yielding to the soldiers (v. 4). When He questions His captors, they mysteriously fall to the ground (v. 6). And He not only rebukes, but defends His disciples (vv. 8-11).

This same assured self-surrender appears in two other aspects of this passage. Jesus braves the future in confidence of the fulfillment of His divine destiny (v. 9). That destiny extends to the disciples as well. With Christ at the head, they participate in history's most dramatic moment.

Although John omits the struggle in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42; Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:40-46), he indicates awareness of it (“shall I not drink the cup?” v. 11, RSV), and in this brief mention alludes to Jesus' surrender to the will of His Father. On several levels, then, John tells of Jesus' control and voluntary surrender to His destiny, to humanity, and to God.

Does being normally ambitious and goal-oriented place one in conflict with the model of self-surrender demonstrated by Jesus in His trial?

2. The Trial (read John 18:13 to 19:15)

“My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did, my followers would be fighting to save me from arrest by the Jews. My kingly authority comes from elsewhere” (18:36, NEB).

None of the gospels attempt to narrate all aspects of the trial, which stretched over at least eight agonizing hours, from approximately 1 to 9 a.m., Friday morning. John records the hearing before Annas and Caiaphas, the high priest (vv. 13-24), and the interrogation before Pilate (18:28 to 19:15). If all the gospel records are blended, possibly five other episodes¹ in the trial sequence may be identified, such as the hearing before Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6-12).

In Pilate's interrogation some of the deeper issues emerge. Intent on ferreting out any subversive tendencies, a constant preoccupation of Roman officials at the time, Pilate probes the royal claims about Jesus. Our Lord does not deny His right to kingship (“For this I was born,” v. 37, RSV), but cuts the ground from under those who, without thinking, would exalt Him to a Jewish throne: “my royal rule is not from here” (v. 36, lit. tran.). The humiliation of insensitive condemnation, and later death, masks the hidden seed of a kingdom which will outlast Rome and all others.

Jerry A. Gladson is a professor of religion at Southern College.

In what ways might we be tempted to "kingdom-building" activity which clashes with the "other-worldly" nature of Jesus' kingdom?

In declaring His kingdom to be "not of this world," did Jesus mean His Kingdom has only to do with heaven?

3. The Crucifixion and Burial (read John 19:16-24)

"There was a bowl of sour wine standing there. So they soaked a sponge in the wine, put it on a spear, and pushed it up toward his mouth. When Jesus had taken it, he cried, 'It is finished!' His head fell forward and he died" (19:29, 30, Phillips).

Arrogant contempt and helpless reverence dominate John's narrative of the crucifixion. Pilate contemptuously places a trilingual caption over the cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (v. 19, RSV). Oblivious to the cosmic drama swirling all around them, the Roman soldiers gamble over the Lord's tunic (vv. 23-25). Smugly pious, the religious authorities² urge Pilate to finish the brutal execution so they might not "profane" the Passover (v. 31).

In sharp contrast stands the tender solicitation of Jesus for His mother, and the response of "the disciple whom he loved," John (v. 26, RSV). Another disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, obtains the body, and Nicodemus, who long ago had talked with Jesus by night, anoints it with expensive myrrh and aloes. Tenderly, with full honor, they lay it in a new tomb in the garden (vv. 38-42).

Even in the crucifixion, John sets out the two attitudes toward Jesus he has contrasted so often in his gospel: "He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (3:18, RSV).

May humankind today be divided into these two attitudes? What about those who have never heard of Jesus?

1. On these, see the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 537-539.
2. So the "Jews" are to be understood here (R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, Anchor Bible, vol. 29 [2nd ed., Garden City: Doubleday, 1966], p. lxxi).

Truth Washed Away

by Valerie Boston

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 18:36-38

"Art thou the King of the Jews?" Pilate demanded, slapping the question in the face of the only One who could answer it truthfully.

Jesus waited. "He knew that the Holy Spirit was striving with Pilate, and He gave him opportunity to acknowledge his conviction. 'Sayest thou this thing of thyself,' He asked, 'or did others tell it thee of me?'" That is, was it the accusation of the priests, or a desire to receive light from Christ, that prompted Pilate's question? Pilate understood Christ's meaning; but pride arose in his heart. He would not acknowledge the conviction that pressed upon him. 'Am I a Jew?' he said. 'Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me? what hast Thou done?'

"Pilate's golden opportunity had passed. Yet Jesus did not leave him without further light. While He did not directly answer Pilate's question, He plainly stated His own mission. He gave Pilate to understand that He was not seeking an earthly throne.

"My kingdom is not of this world,' He said. . . . 'To this end was I born, . . . that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.'"¹

"What is truth?" Pilate asked—his most important question.

"But he did not wait for an answer. The tumult outside recalled him to the interests of the hour; for the priests were clamorous for immediate action."² He tried to avoid any decision by sending Jesus to Herod first, then attempting to appease the Jews by offering them Barabbas. But while he was delaying "the priests and rulers were still further inflaming the minds of the people. Pilate was forced to action."³

Pilate had hoped to both gain the truth and escape the tumult of the crowd. In the end, "he yielded to the demands of the mob."⁴ "Rather than lose his worldly power, he chose to sacrifice an innocent life. How many, to escape loss or suffering, in like manner sacrifice principle. Conscience and duty point one way, and self-interest points another. The current sets strongly in the wrong direction, and he who compromises with evil is swept away into the thick darkness of guilt."⁵

Pilate compromised with sin, washing his hands of the very truth he'd asked for.

REACT

Is compromise always bad? Suggest some instances where it might be bad and some where it might be good. See if others agree with you.

1. *The Desire of Ages*,
p. 727.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 733.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 738.
5. *Ibid.*

At the time of this writing, Valerie Boston was secretary to the division of arts and letters at Southern College.

Enthroned on the Tree

by Leon Morris

John sees the death of Christ as a unifying force. There is much talk of unity today, and John speaks here to our age. But the unity he sees is not a vague one, based on general principles, or a desire for fellowship, or a distaste for schism. It is the unity of those who are saved in Christ. As Jesus spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd, He said, "I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd" (Jn. 10:15ff.). This passion for unity comes out also in our Lord's saying, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (Jn. 12:32), and in the prayer that His followers be one (Jn. 17:21). John sees this also in Caiaphas' unconscious prophecy, which he explains as that Christ should die not only for Israel, "but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad" (Jn. 11:52). The thought is not expressed in the same language as when Paul in Ephesians 2:13ff., speaks of breaking down the middle wall of partition, but it is essentially the same thought. True unity among men depends on true salvation. When men get right with God, then and only then may we expect them to be right with each other.

From all this it is clear that the cross is the mighty climax to which all else leads up. For John, Jesus is the divine Son of God, come to earth expressly in order to bring about man's salvation. In this capacity he depicts Him as perpetually in conflict with all the forces of darkness, and as especially in conflict with them in His death. So much does John stress all this that when the dying Saviour cries, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30), John sees no need for further explanation. This is the moment to which the whole Gospel leads with the remorseless logic of a Greek tragedy. But John does not see it as a tragedy. It is no coincidence that it is in the very passion narrative that Jesus is confronted with Pilate, the representative of earthly power and dominion. One by one all the other characters drop out, and John lets us see Christ confronted by the representative of the world's most eminent kingdoms. In this way His own kingship is brought out (Jn. 18:37, 39; 19:3, 14, 15, 19, 21f.). The repeated references to the King is John's way of hammering this point home. It is an important idea for John. The kingship of Jesus is seen precisely in the cross. As the Fathers liked to think, He reigned from the tree.

REACT

1. In what ways can the cross be a unifying factor in the Adventist church? Between Adventists and Christians of other denominations?
2. How can it be that the crucifixion was a *victory* for Christ? (See also 1 Cor. 1:18-25; Col. 2:13-15; Heb. 2:14, 15.)

EVIDENCE

Key text:
John 19:30

"True unity among men depends on true salvation."

Excerpted from *The Cross in the New Testament* by Leon Morris, pp. 178, 179. Copyright © 1965 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Used by permission.

Leon Morris, an Australian scholar, has written numerous books on New Testament theology.

Just Like Jesus?

by Mel Campbell

HOW TO

Key text:
Matthew
11:28-30

"We would be like Jesus" is a statement that even the most liberal Adventist would not dispute. However, when more than cursory consideration is given to its implications, this statement frankly frightens me. Especially when "being like Jesus" deals with His final days on earth. I realize that "being like Jesus" resulted in many early Christians dying for their faith. This I can handle, albeit uneasily! But to bear the sins, sorrows, trouble of the entire world seems more of a God's job than a man's or woman's or mine. Here is where I wonder if I really want to be like Jesus. I can cry with those who cry and laugh with those who laugh, but I can't cry for those who laugh and die for those who live. If I tried it would not ultimately do anyone any good. But when Jesus bore the world's anguish, though it crushed the life out of Him, He thereby provided salvation for us.

Being like Jesus is somewhat clearer in some cases—treatment of children, slaves, poor, rich, pagans, etc. But at times we selectively invoke "being like Jesus." For example, if a friend, son, or daughter has been dismissed from school, we may well ask the dean why he/she could not treat the offender as Jesus treated people. Obviously we would have in mind the way Jesus dealt with Mary, rather than the way He dealt with Ananias and Sapphira.

"We selectively invoke 'being like Jesus' "

So, there are some ways we should not and cannot be like Jesus. Although there are lessons from the passion week for me, I choose to leave that part of Jesus' life to Him and Him alone. I have neither the physical nor emotional strength to bear the sins and trouble of those about me—it would kill me.

As a matter of fact, I cannot even bear my own sins and sorrows, let alone anyone else's. So my message to those about me is that this last terrible week of Jesus' assures us pleasant days. "His yoke is easy and His burden is light." Now that is worth sharing.

REACT

Granted that we are not required to bear the world's sins like Jesus did, what do you think Jesus meant by telling us that we are to take up our cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34, 35)?

Mel Campbell is a professor of education at Southern College.

What's Your Bag of Silver?

by Wilma McClarty

OPINION

Key text:
John 18:2

How many boys do you know who at birth were fondly christened *Judas*? Universally synonymous with betrayal, avarice, power hunger, and deceit, Judas has experienced as much bad press as anyone in Scripture. He wins a unanimous worst-of-the-bad award.

And several other Bible characters besides Judas sold out that Black Friday also—Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, even Peter. Some bartered eternal life for a few transitory months of earthly power. One disciple sold his loyalty for the price of three cursings.

Now in a group picture we all tend to look for ourselves first, but for some reason in spiritual situations, we tend to fit the moral to others. So to be honest with the Judas story, we must ask ourselves, "Had we been there for the Passion Week, would we have sold out cheap, too? Have we *ever* sold out cheap?"

The cynic claims that "*everyone* has his price," not just Judas, but all of us. What's your price? Mine? Now I'm not talking about the body's worth—we've all heard the statistics of an average man's worth being about \$8.00 chemically. No, not body worth, but . . .

What's the cost of buying our support?

What price does our integrity go for?

What are we willing to bargain for a little power?

In short, what's our Bag of Silver?

If we were appalled at the political maneuverings of Watergate, would some of us have an uneasy afternoon if tonight on the six o'clock news all Christians who have ever been devious in day-to-day dealings were to be exposed in living color? Would some of us blanch if the records of our personal business were to be made publically transparent?

Of course, we're all born too late to be Bible characters, and most of us have neither the fame nor the money to make the history books or even the newspaper as notorious examples of personal integrity. Let's face it—we're all rather small time. But famous or not, each person has just one soul to save or to lose.

Yes, the cynic claims that "*everyone* has his price," and generally speaking that may be true. But is it true specifically about you or me? The philosopher has warned, "Be careful of what you want, for you may get it." I'll paraphrase that: "Be careful of what price you ask for your soul, for there's someone out there willing to pay it." Thirty pieces of silver really isn't all that much.

"The cynic claims that 'Everyone has his price.'"

Wilma McClarty is a professor of English at Southern College.

THE GREAT DISCOVERY

“Jesus came and stood among them, and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ” (John 20:26-28, RSV).



The Blue Seal Dollar

by Stacy McDowell

"That will be \$2.47," the sales clerk told Maryln. As Maryln reached into her purse for a five-dollar bill, David took a battered matchbox truck out of his lunch pail and raced it over the table between a china penguin and a potted fern.

Glaring at David, the clerk thrust two dollars with some coins across the counter. "Here's yer change!"

One dollar for a dozen eggs, quarters to work the car wash, thought Maryln as she looked down at the two bills. One bill appeared larger; instead of green, the seal was blue. Counterfeit? She wondered. She started to give it back, but Deanna was fussing and David was picking up his truck for another run.

She grabbed David's truck hand. "Come on kids. One more stop, the market."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Parker," Maryln greeted the grocer. He took the eggs from her hands. The funny buttons on the old cash register, shaped like flat-topped mushrooms, squeaked as he

mashed them.

"Oh, you don't want to give me this." Mr. Parker handed her the blue seal dollar.

"I didn't mean to, but what is it?"

"It's a silver certificate, an old bill backed by silver. They are collector's items now."

Maryln laughed. "At first I valued it as a regular dollar by how many groceries it would buy. When I looked at it closer, I thought maybe it was counterfeit, worthless. But now you tell me it's a collector's item and the value keeps increasing!"

"Yes, its value keeps increasing," Mr. Parker agreed. "You're lucky you didn't trade it away."

How do we value the Messiah? Do we take a limited view of Him like the Jews who wanted Him only to be a liberator from the Romans or a flashy wonder-worker? Do we see Him as worthless, counterfeit, dead? Or do we prize Him as One who, like the silver certificate, is of ever-increasing value to us, for He is the eternal life-giving Lord?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture:
John 20 and 21

Stacy McDowell is an English major at Southern College.

“I Have Seen the Lord!”

LOGOS **Theme:** The resurrected Jesus appeared to His followers, confirming His identity as Messiah and Son of God, the One in whom life eternal may be found.

1. The Empty Tomb (read John 20:1-9)

John's resurrection narrative throbs with the emotion caused by the greatest and most incredible discovery ever. The genuine humanness of the reactions to the empty tomb, to the news that Jesus is alive, and to the risen Lord Himself, give the story the ring of truth.

Though Jesus' followers were devastated by the crucifixion, their affections still centered on their Master. Love brought Mary of Magdala to the tomb before sunrise on Sunday to anoint the body (cf. Mark 16:1). Love sent Peter and John racing pell-mell to the tomb when Mary reported that it was empty. They discovered that Mary was right about the empty tomb, but wrong in her speculation that a hostile party had taken the body, for why would such individuals take the time to fold the burial cloth (v. 7)? As John pondered these things, an evolution from incredulity to belief began (v. 8), though he did not immediately reach full-fledged resurrection faith (v. 9).

Compare the gospel accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb: Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-10; along with John 20:1-18. Also read The Desire of Ages, pp. 788, 789. Is it possible to harmonize all the details of these accounts? If there are unresolvable discrepancies, do they weaken the credibility of the story?

2. Mary and the Risen Jesus (read John 20:10-18)

"Mary of Magdala went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!'" (20:18, NIV).

The encounter between Mary Magdalene and the resurrected Jesus is perhaps the most poignant in all the gospels. Of all those who loved Jesus during His sojourn on earth, no one loved Him with the depth and intensity that Mary did. Jesus had freed Mary from seven demons (Luke 8:2), and according to tradition they were demons of promiscuity and debauchery. Because she had been forgiven much, she loved much (Luke 7:47), and it was she that Jesus honored with His first resurrection appearance.

Tear-dimmed eyes and distraught emotions prevented Mary from recognizing Jesus at first. But when the Good Shepherd called her by name, she recognized His voice (cf. 10:4). With unrestrainable joy at the discovery that her Liberator was alive, she began to embrace Him, probably by the feet (cf. Matt. 28:9). "Do not hold on to me," Jesus said, not because He somehow wanted to prevent physical contact with His resurrection body, but because He could not be detained from the next phase of His mission at the right hand of God the Father. "The desire to hold Jesus must be restrained, because it is an attempt to recapture the conditions of the incarnate life in

place of the universal and abiding relationship which is the object of his mission."¹ The time for prolonged face-to-face fellowship was not yet. Jesus had to ascend so that through His Spirit He could fellowship with all believers.

Is it possible for all of us to love Jesus with the depth of emotion that Mary did? What can we learn from her about how our love for Him can be strengthened?

3. The Disciples and the Risen Jesus (read John 20:19-23)

"Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you' " (20:21, NIV).

Though the disciples were still huddled together for fear of the authorities, the reports of Mary, John and Peter must have kindled at least a spark of desperate hope in their hearts. And then, suddenly, the news which seemed too good to be true was proven to be true. Jesus appeared in their midst, proclaiming "peace," and demonstrating that He was in fact the same Jesus that they had known, loved, and seen crucified.

Jesus then commissioned the disciples as the agents through whom the divine purposes on earth were now to be carried out. And just as God breathed life into man at creation (Gen. 2:7) and into the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision (Eze. 37:9), Jesus empowered His disciples to fulfill His commission by breathing on them the Holy Spirit. The resurrected Lord was breathing life into a new creation—the church.²

The disciples' commission included the extending and withholding of the forgiveness of sins (v. 23). This is a difficult passage to understand, but we may be certain that the disciples themselves were not given God-like authority, they were only to act in behalf of Christ, who alone holds ultimate authority (Matt. 28:18) and power to forgive (1 John 1:9). "This sentence [v. 23] does not mean that the power to forgive sins was ever entrusted to any man or men; it means that the power to proclaim that forgiveness was so entrusted; along with power to warn that forgiveness is not open to the impenitent."³

4. Thomas and the Risen Jesus (read John 20:24-29)

"Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God' " (20:28, NIV).

There may be more than one valid way of interpreting the story of Thomas. Because he was absent when Jesus first appeared to the gathered disciples, Thomas may stand as a negative example for all those who subsequently are called to believe without empirical proof. Jesus pronounced blessing on those who, unlike Thomas, believe on the basis of favorable evidence and convincing witness, rather than actual sight.

But it may also be possible to view Thomas in a more positive light. First, he had an uncompromising intellectual integrity. He

refused to say he believed something he really didn't believe deep down in order to stay in the good graces of the group. He had to be personally convinced, and once he was, his commitment was unre-served. As Tennyson put it:

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."⁴

Second, Thomas insisted on knowing for sure that the resurrected Jesus was real, that He wasn't just the product of the fervid hopes, imaginations, or recollections of the other disciples.

"Because of Thomas, we know that at least one person among the founders of the primitive church insisted that the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith be the same person. Thomas would only worship the Jesus who really died, and therefore his difficult journey to faith becomes for us a very vital theological ingredient in the formation of our understanding of the gospel. We now know that the historical question was indeed asked by the early Christians, just as we ask it in our generation. Christian faith does not worship a phantom Jesus, a fantasy Jesus; nor is it the brave faith of men and women about a memory about Jesus. We go the whole way—our faith is in the Jesus who lives."⁵

What do you think about Thomas? Does he demonstrate attitudes Christians should avoid? Or is he an admirable figure?

5. Conclusion and Epilogue (read John 20:30 to 21:25)

John's hyperbolic conclusion that recording all of Jesus' deeds would require books filling the whole world tantalizes us to know more about what didn't get written down. But what has been written is more than sufficient to lead us to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" and by thus believing, to "have life in his name" (John 20:31, NIV).

D. F. M.

1. Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 607.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 611.

3. William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 274.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

5. Earl F. Palmer, *The Intimate Gospel* (Waco:

Key to Unity

by Cecil Rolfe

Peter's strong will, and his concern as to what others were thinking and doing often led him into trouble. Once, while his attention was thus diverted, he almost drowned. On another occasion he denied his Lord. In both instances it was a look to Jesus which straightened out his priorities. Now, at the close of Jesus' earthly ministry, we find Peter once more overly anxious about the affairs of others. This resulted in a final rebuke from his Lord who said, "What is that to thee? follow thou me" (see John 21:21, 22).

Peter learned to keep his eyes on Jesus. In Him he found perfection and became Christlike. This enabled him to strengthen his brethren and feed the flock. And when confronted by Paul he was able to subordinate his opinions, which brought unity to the church. Out of this unity grew strength.

The church today requires this same spirit. Only by looking to Jesus will it become feeders of the flock and not dispersers. "If the world sees a perfect harmony existing in the church of God, it will be a powerful evidence to them in favor of the Christian religion. Dissensions, unhappy differences, and petty church trials dishonor our Redeemer. . . . Christ saw that unity and Christian fellowship were necessary to the cause of God, therefore he enjoined it upon His disciples."¹

"When Christ made so great a sacrifice to save men and bring them into unity with one another, even as He was united with the Father, what sacrifice is too great for His followers to make in order to preserve that unity?"²

"God is leading out a people to stand in perfect unity upon the platform of eternal truth. Christ gave Himself to the world that He might 'purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.' This refining process is designed to purge the church from all unrighteousness and the spirit of discord and contention, that they may build up instead of tear down and concentrate their energies on the great work before them. . . .

"Many do not realize the sacredness of church relationship and are loath to submit to restraint and discipline. Their course of action shows that they exalt their own judgment above that of the united church, and they are not careful to guard themselves lest they encourage a spirit of opposition to its voice. . . .

"Every believer should be wholehearted in his attachment to the church. Its prosperity should be his first interest, and unless he feels under sacred obligations to make his connection with the church a benefit to it in preference to himself, it can do far better without him."³

REACT

Is controversy always bad for the church? Are there times when taking a stand for truth is more important than preserving unity?

TESTIMONY

Key text:
John 21:22

**"Dissensions,
unhappy
differences,
and petty
church trials
dishonor our
Redeemer."**

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 4,
p. 19.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18.

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Dimensions of Resurrection Faith

by Helmut Ott

EVIDENCE The Fact of the Resurrection

Key text:
John 20:30, 31

John writes with absolute certainty about the resurrection of Jesus as an actual, historical event. He begins by establishing the fact of the empty tomb. His report is particularly convincing because, besides mentioning that Mary of Magdala and Peter were there, he says that he saw with his own eyes that the tomb was both open and empty. Then he tells of some of the appearances which convinced even the skeptical Thomas that the Master was alive.

One of the strongest arguments in favor of Christ's resurrection is the radical change experienced by the disciples. The news of the cross plunged them into deep hopelessness, despair and fear. In turn, the news of the empty tomb, and their personal meetings with Christ after the resurrection, filled them with a joy, an assurance and a courage that were nothing short of miraculous. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, these broken weaklings who had been hiding in fear became the fearless apostles who defied persecutions, suffering and death in order to proclaim the good news that their beloved Master had risen from the dead.

"Broken weaklings became the fearless apostles who defied persecutions, suffering and death."

The Meaning of the Resurrection

Besides being an historical event, the resurrection of Jesus is also one of the central and basic truths of the Christian faith. It provides the necessary substance for doctrines dealing with the Person, the work and the message of Jesus on the one hand, and the believer's hope of salvation on the other.

Concerning Christ, it validates, first, His claim to be equal to the Father; it removes all doubts concerning the fact that, besides being fully human Jesus was also fully divine (John 14:9).

Second, it validates Christ's redemptive mission and atoning death. Had He not risen from the dead, Christ's death on the cross would have been totally in vain (1 Cor. 15:12f.).

Third, it confirms the fact that the living Savior now is both undisputable Lord and effective High Priest (Acts 5:30, 31; Heb. 7:25). Because Jesus sat down on His throne next to the Father, the believer knows that he has an all-powerful substitute/mediator ministering on his behalf in the very presence of God.

And fourth, it authenticates Christ's promise of the second coming. Because the risen Savior ascended into heaven, the believer rests assured that, at the time "the Father has set by his own authority," Jesus will come again to establish God's eternal kingdom of glory (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:6, 7).

Response to the Resurrection

The evangelist summarizes the purpose of his entire gospel as follows: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:31, NIV). John has told a story—a unique, amazing, and strangely moving story. Yet his objective is not merely to in-

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form; it goes beyond convincing the readers about the truth of his story or persuading them to accept the historicity of its Protagonist. John's true objective is to move his audience; to awaken the response that will lead to a saving, faith-relationship between the readers and the risen Lord so that, through Him, they may have eternal life.

In the process of stating his basic objective, John establishes the fact that sinners are not saved by an event or a combination of events. Instead, they are saved by Jesus Christ, the risen Lord and living Savior. That is what Jesus Himself revealed when He said, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (3:36, NIV).

Consequently, what is essential is not merely knowing the details of the story or accepting its factuality. Instead, what is decisive is to experience faith—to become spiritually linked, by faith, to the One who "became flesh and lived for a while among us" (1:14), who came not to participate in man's sin, but to save those who believe in Him from their sin; who as the "good shepherd" came not to share in the sheep's lostness but to lay "down his life for the sheep" that were lost (10:11, NIV).

"John's true objective is to move his audience."

Eternal life, then, is not something irrevocably bestowed on the believer at one instance as a permanent possession. Instead, it is something that exists only in Christ—it is His personal possession—and consequently can be had only as by faith one participates in Him. In this sense, life eternal is not different from all the other gifts of God's grace which, like the manna in the wilderness, can be had only as a new supply is received afresh every day (John 3:36; 6:53f.; Col. 3:1-4; 1 John 5:11, 12).

REACT

1. Do you think it is easier or more difficult for us to believe in the resurrection than those to whom the disciples first preached it in the first century? Why?
2. What practical, experiential significance can the resurrection have for twentieth-century people?

How to Recognize Honest Doubts

by Vinita Sauder

HOW TO
Key text:
John 20:24-28;
21:15-17

The story of "doubting Thomas" contains lessons both about Christ's understanding character and about how we should relate to others who have doubts.

John's brief narrative makes it obvious that the time of Jesus' death and resurrection was a difficult and uncertain one for the disciples. In fact, the description of the events surrounding His reappearance is almost eerie. The disciples must have cross-examined themselves over and over trying to understand what was really taking place.

It's no wonder then that Thomas, and maybe some of the others, entertained some doubts as to the identity of this being that had appeared to them. Thomas certainly was expressive in his doubting—he wouldn't believe it unless he saw *and* touched Jesus, no less!

Many might think that Thomas' attitude was bordering pretty close to presumption and unbelief. Certainly we all can't demand to see and hear before we believe, can we?

I think, however, that Thomas epitomizes the *honest* doubters of the world. What made his doubting honest as opposed to dishonest? It was his sincere desire to understand. Because of that apparent sincerity, Jesus opened Thomas' eyes and helped him see what was taking place. Jesus accepted his doubt as unpretentious. Thomas opened his heart with a sincere desire to know the truth, and Jesus was ready and willing to demonstrate His saving power and cleansing grace. In *Steps to Christ*, Ellen White points out that those "who wish to doubt will have the opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith."¹

"Thomas epitomizes the honest doubters of the world."

She also explains that doubt can often be caused by the human pride that gets in the way when we can't understand everything down to the minutest detail. Topics like the entrance of sin into the world, the resurrection, and Christ's ascension, are all mysteries too deep for the human mind fully to comprehend. For the *honest* doubter, these mysteries will stimulate humility and a desire to understand. On the other hand, for the *dishonest* doubter, or skeptic, the one who has "an evil heart of unbelief" (Heb. 3:12), these mysteries kindle the flame of infidelity. These dishonest doubters purposefully look for things to doubt and then magnify them.

A lesson about relating to doubt may also be found in Jesus' final dialogue with Peter (John 21:15-19). By His repeated instructions to "feed my sheep," Jesus gave Peter an opportunity to resolve both his self-doubts, and his lingering uncertainties about the significance of the resurrection. Those who doubt and who are trying to understand may sometimes just need a little encouragement, a little reassurance, a pat on the back during their moment of doubt.

Since none of us can help but see through a glass darkly in this world, we need to help each other when honest doubts assail. Together, we can look forward to the soon-coming day when all the mysteries of God will be made plain.

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1. *Steps to Christ*, p. 105.

He Is Not Here, He Is Everywhere

by Mel Campbell

OPINION

Key text:
Luke 24:6

I was on the Spiritual Aims Committee of a local Kiwanis Club. The committee decided to organize a traditional sunrise Easter service in conjunction with the local ministerial association for the Kiwanians and area churches. The service was well planned—a good speaker, a brass quintet, hot drink, printed programs, all in an outdoor amphitheater in a newly constructed park. The Kiwanians were urged to come. Invitations were given to the area churches including my own church, but my church refused to put the announcement in the bulletin. I was stunned!

Now I know that the origins and practices of Easter have some associations with paganism and Sunday worship. I also know that baptism is an ongoing rite in Adventism symbolizing the resurrection. Yet why ignore an opportunity to celebrate the greatest doctrine of Christian theology with fellow Christians? The unity of humanity will only be found in the Jesus of the resurrection.

Why do Adventists celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas with such enthusiasm and yet ignore the resurrection of Jesus, which is the keystone of Christian theology, at Easter? The answer is probably found in the association of secularism and paganism with Easter. Yet is Christmas really any different than Easter in terms of secularism and paganism? I think not.

Another possible explanation is that Christmas is much easier to handle than Easter. Or, perhaps I should say that the Jesus of Christmas is more easily dealt with than the Jesus of Easter. We can hold the baby Jesus in our arms, change His diapers, make nativity scenes, give Him a shekel to help Him have a safe trip to Egypt and hold His hand on the way to the synagogue—all the while patronizing the God of heaven. But the Jesus of Easter, the resurrected Jesus, takes us in His arms, clothes us as He does the sparrows, gives us a resting place, says He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, takes our hand, and controls our lives. At Christmas a child is born and He is in the manger, but at Easter He is not here. He is risen, He is everywhere!

“The Jesus of Easter cannot be contained. He is out of control.”

The Jesus of Christmas can be contained in a box, a church, a tithe envelope, a temple, a manger or books. The Jesus of Easter *cannot* be contained in any of these. He is out of control. He is everywhere. Yet paradoxically the “everywhere Jesus” can be contained in the hearts of humans. Thus humans now control not Jesus but their own lives, guilt, sin and freedom.

He is not here, He is risen . . . He is everywhere.

REACT

Should Adventists celebrate Easter? If so, in what way?

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Next Quarter's Lessons

CALL TO COMMITMENT

Studies in Haggai, Malachi and James

For readers who have not yet received a copy of COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY for fourth quarter, 1986, here is a summary of the first four lessons.

Lesson 1: SELF-GIVING COMMITMENT

Scripture: Romans 12:1, 2; Luke 10:27; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; 9:6-9; Deuteronomy 16:17; Mark 10:28-31

Theme: The gospel calls us to a response of giving ourselves entirely to Christ, committing to him every resource that we have been given.

Lesson 2: A PROBLEM OF PRIORITIES

Scripture: Haggai 1

Theme: Commitment to God means making His cause our highest priority, and the well-being of the community of believers depends on whether its priorities are ordered in this way.

Lesson 3: THE PRESENCE AND THE PROMISE

Scripture: Haggai 2

Theme: It is the presence of God's Spirit, not immediate external appearances, which determines the success of an endeavor, and that same Spirit is a guarantee of peace and glory for God's chosen and faithful people.

Lesson 4: THE TESTING OF COMMITMENT

Scripture: James 1:1-15

Theme: Hard times and temptations test our commitment, but when we turn in faith to God for wisdom, we are enabled to persevere. Perseverance builds our spiritual strength and leads to the maturity of character God desires for His sons and daughters.

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