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1973: Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures - Full Text

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EDWIN H. ENZOR

JESUS

being the
Abilene Christian College
Annual Bible Lectures

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PREFACE

Jesus of Nazareth stands at the center of all history. His appearance in Palestine, His death for the sins of the world, and His resurrection and glorification are the most momentous series of events in all human history.

Christians in 1973, and in every age, could find no more important subject for consideration than that of "Jesus." With the renewed national and international interest in the God-man, there can be no more pressing task for the Christian than to be sure again that we see Him as God intended us to see Him.

The general purpose of the Annual Bible Lectureship at Abilene Christian College is to further the cause of Christ, and this is the real reason why the College itself exists. The Annual Lectureship Program inspires Christians and furnishes them information and an opportunity to exchange ideas for improving their work for the Lord. The Lectureship Committee believes that this is one of the greatest gatherings in the world for achieving these purposes and welcomes ideas for improving the program.

This volume is dedicated to that multitude of faithful Christians around the world to whom Jesus is Lord.

CARL BRECHEEN, Director
The Annual Bible Lectureship

MAIN SPEECHES

UNITY IN CHRIST

James LeFan

- BORN:** February 17, 1923, Bailey, Texas
- COLLEGE:** Attended Abilene Christian College 1940-1944 with a major in Education and minors in Speech and Bible.
- FAMILY:** He was married in November, 1944 to Jackie Lusk of Eastland, Texas. They have three children: Mike 26, Loris 22, and Kevin 18.
- CHURCHES:** He served as associate minister with P. D. Wilmeth of the Northside (Now Jefferson) Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas from 1944-1946. Upon leaving San Antonio the family moved to Bay-



town, Texas where he served as the minister of the Missouri Street Church of Christ until 1950. He has worked with the Western Hills Church in Temple, Texas since 1950.

WRITINGS & SPEAKING:

He has contributed articles at various times to the following religious publications: 20th Century Christian, Power For Today, Minister's Monthly, Teen-Age Christian, and has spoken at the Pepperdine College, Lubbock Christian College, Harding College, Fort Worth Christian College, David Lipscomb College, and Abilene Christian College Annual Lectureship Programs.

CIVIC:

Member of Temple Lion's Club and past chaplain of Lion's Club. On Board of Directors of Lion's Crippled Children Foundation, Inc. . . Past president and member of the Board of "Bell County Society for Crippled Children" . . Chairman Leon Valley Chapter of the March of Dimes. Received special recognition from the governor of the state of Texas for his work in behalf of the mentally retarded.

Past president of the Alumni Association of Abilene Christian College.

Our purpose in this assembly is to confront our lives with the Word of God on a theme of such importance that the very future of the cause of our Lord will be vitally influenced for good or evil by our response. That theme is, "Unity in Christ." Let us not think of ourselves as casual listeners, but as Christians who must play a responsible part in bringing unity to the body of Christ. If we are members of the body of Christ, unity—visible, convincing unity—is not a matter that we can be for or against. This is part of our commitment. There is no place for neutrality.

GOD DESIRES THAT HIS PEOPLE BE UNITED

God's message to man is not a message of estrangement but of reconciliation (Eph. 2:16-22). He never finds pleasure in the alienation of brethren, but he does desire that they share the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Jesus taught that a "kingdom divided against itself cannot stand" (Mk. 3:24). The church today desperately needs to recognize the implications of this truth.

God planned "that in the dispensation of the fullness of

times he might gather in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on the earth; even in him” (Eph. 1:10).

The Lord Jesus Christ revealed the same intent when he prayed, “That they may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21).

The Holy Spirit guided the apostle Paul to make this same plea for the unity of God’s people. “For as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom 12:4,5). He admonished the Corinthians,

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. . . . That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another” (1 Cor. 12: 12, 13, 25).

I could cite a multitude of similar passages from the New Testament to confirm that it is the will of God that all who name the name of Christ should be one, but these passages are adequate.

THE SIN OF DIVISION

If it is God’s will that all Christians be one body, who dares to resist that will? If division is in opposition to God, who dares to support, countenance or establish it? Is not

division opposed to the plea and prayer of Christ? Has not division hindered the cause of Christ, weakened our energies, and strengthened the hands of wickedness? It is the joy of demons, the grief of heaven, and the ruin of the world. The scripture speaks plainly of the sin of those who cause divisions and rend the body of Christ. Paul beseeches,

“Brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:17, 18).

He also declares to the Corinthians, “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (I Cor. 3:3).

CAUSES OF DIVISION

The shameful and numerous divisions within the church constitute a galling yoke that limits all endeavors for Christ. They make ineffective the plea of God’s people to the world. How did the disciples of Christ ever come to be divided? The answer is not simple. I shall list only a few of the more obvious causes.

1. *Human creeds.* Human creeds, from their very origin have been a prolific source of division. From the beginning of the restoration movement the plea has been, “No creed but Christ, no book of authority but the Bible.” Whenever credal statements were formulated, they soon resulted in the formation of another sect. The sect then insisted on unity in matters not specifically stated in Scripture but deduced by men and expressed in either written or unwritten creeds.

While we have opposed creeds being made tests of fellowship, have we been altogether free of the sin? Let me illustrate. A few years ago a man called me on the phone to inquire about the church. He put his question like this, "I want to know the answer to a question, does the church where you preach have Bible classes?" I asked him if this was the one thing he considered most important about the church. He replied, "Yes, it is." He did not inquire about our faith in Christ as God's son, our respect for the authority of His word, or our love for lost souls, but only about whether or not the church has Bible classes. Written in his creed is the requirement that a church NOT HAVE BIBLE CLASSES. If it does, it is not the Lord's church and he can have no fellowship with those who make it up. Lest we judge him too harshly, we might ask ourselves if we are altogether free from this same sin. We might ask, "Does this church support orphan homes?" We too, according to our creed, draw the lines of fellowship. Do not misunderstand me! I know that these questions are matters of conviction, but are they questions that permit the formation of a creed that excludes from fellowship all who do not hold these convictions as I do?

2. *The party spirit is also a continued cause of divisions.*
This was the problem in Corinth.

"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3:3-7).

Men, consciously or unconsciously, still say, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos." Some find it easier to follow men than

the Lord. There is a good deal of heathenism in us; we want a god we can see. Almost every division in the church has been at the hands of preachers with strong wills and deep convictions who have tenaciously pushed their convictions on a certain issue to the dividing of the body of Christ. Thus another party is born. It does not take long for a strong preacher to convince others of his views and he soon has his following. The vital principle of this new party is the issue out of which it grew. The sect will now live, eat, breathe and proclaim the issue that gave it life. It will not be long before it declares that all others have departed from the faith. It will not be long until the party can no longer fellowship those that were once called "brethren." The party spirit always seeks to perpetuate divisions which exist. It creates barriers of suspicion and seeks to divide brother from brother. A party spirit is always wrong and is listed among the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19, 20. The party spirit is contrary to the command of God, the prayer of Christ, the exhortations of the apostles and the very spirit of God in all of his new-born children, for they are born with heavenly love into the family of God. Those who are enlisted into a party soon forget the good exhortation, "Let brotherly love continue." How many happy souls whom God has joined together has partyism severed with an unhallowed hand?

3. *False teaching also leads to division.* Paul warns the elders of the church at Ephesus,

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:29, 30).

False teachers will arise from time to time within the church to draw away the disciples of Christ. Paul gives instruction in

Romans 16:17 as to how this problem is to be met. "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." If men sought to divide the church over a teaching that was contrary to the teaching of the apostles, the church was simply to mark them and avoid them. There was to be no parleying, no disputation; the bird was not to catch the glare of the serpent's eye, lest it be fascinated and drawn into the jaws of death! Rather one bold stroke was needed—avoid them. This passage does not teach that if a brother believes an error the church is to avoid or withdraw from him. If this were true, there would be none in fellowship. It does mean, however, that any man who seeks to divide the church with his error is to be avoided. It is the factious spirit that threatens the well-being of the church and makes fellowship impossible.

RESULTS OF DIVISION

We have paid a dear price for the divisions of our past. Only eternity will reveal the full and terrible cost to the happiness of brethren and to the salvation of a lost world. Here are some of the consequences that come in the wake of division:

1. *Weakness.* Division always limits or destroys the cooperation of Christians one with another. The strength of our various factions is spent in opposing one another instead of combatting sin and Satan. In unity there is strength, but there is only weakness in division.

2. *Scandal.* Division within the body of Christ has earned for it the contempt of the world. The denominational world is desperately searching for a way to unite, but they have not looked to us for help. Why, haven't we been pleading unity

for the past 165 years? Yes, but our own divisions have nullified the validity of our plea. The would-be renovator of religion shows its own need of renovation. Physician, heal thyself!

3. *Unchristian Feeling.* Unity begets a growing love while division stirs up strife and hatred. Division is a prime source of discord, animosity, contention, and ill will among those who profess to worship and serve the Prince of Peace.

4. *A lost world.* Hear our Lord as He prays,

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who believe on me through their word, that they all may be one as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us, that the world may believe thou hast sent me” (John 17: 20, 21).

What a tremendous thought! The unity of believers is a means that the Lord has appointed to bring lost men to faith in Him. Shall Christians nullify the divinely appointed means by living in disunity? Shall we, by perpetuating division, be instrumental in plunging the world into eternal ruin? Shall we mockingly deride those servants who plead for Christian unity and who urge it as the command of God and the salvation of the world? Mott was right when he said, “The price of a divided Christendom is a lost world.” That, my brother, is a terrible price to pay.

It is not pleasant to contemplate the consequences of division. That present divisions may be healed and others prevented, let us face the ugly truth that division cripples Christian conquest, weakens the power of the gospel, hinders the conversion of sinners, arms infidelity with one of its most powerful weapons, opposes the aim of our Lord’s prayer,

retards the increase of Biblical knowledge, sets God's people at variance through strife and discord, and robs heaven of its rightful inhabitants. Let the man who causes or perpetuates division consider well his deed.

TOWARD UNITY

The last half of the twentieth century has fostered a greater interest and concern for unity than any period since the first half of the nineteenth century. Twenty-five years ago any plea for "one church," and any condemnation of division as sin was generally received with great resentment in denominational circles. Times have changed! Denominationalism itself now speaks of the sin of division and the necessity for followers of Christ to be united in one body. An attitude and spirit may now be in the process of formation in denominationalism that will open doors of great opportunity for a strong restoration plea.

However, in this message I am concerned about the healing of divisions among those who are heirs of the restoration movement, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, among those who have believed in Christ as the Son of God and have been baptized for the remission of their sins into Christ. These have all entered God's family by the new birth. These by one Spirit have been baptized into one body (I Cor. 12:13), and are, therefore, members one of another.

I cannot believe that the division that now exists among brethren can represent the mind of God. The church has been divided over Bible Classes, communion cups, orphan homes, instrumental music, types of congregational cooperation, and other issues. For myself, I can well believe that the gates of

hell will never prevail against the church, for every fragment of it seems to have a quality of indestructibility. Anyone who has tried to unite brethren who have divided will know what I mean. In every division, those on both sides are sure they occupy the New Testament position and constitute the true church. While honest differences about Biblical teaching may well put a strain on fellowship, they should never put brethren into opposing camps which war against one another.

Because all of us are convinced that division is wrong, because most of us long to be united again, because there are so few real differences between us, and because God wills it, let us begin to think in terms of unity and not division. What can we do to restore fellowship between brethren? I suggest the answer may well lie in developing and showing a Christian attitude toward one another.

THESE GRACES WILL HELP

The apostle Paul in Ephesian 4:1-3 sets forth certain Christian graces that can be most helpful in forming the right disposition for keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Let us now note these five graces—lowliness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, love.

LOWLINESS OF MIND. There are few things more essential to unity among brethren than lowliness of mind.

Pride, arrogance, and conceit produce division, but humility helps to maintain unity. Because we are not God, but his children, our understanding is sometimes darkened, and this fact ought to make us humble. It is this accent upon humility which is desperately needed amid this welter of claims and counterclaims. Believers are not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think (Rom. 12:3), nor exalt themselves above their degree (2 Cor. 10:13-15), but to esteem others better than themselves (Phil. 2:3). Let believers, therefore, have an humble apprehension of their knowledge, for "knowledge puffeth up" (I Cor. 8:1); and humble thoughts of their goodness, for we cannot understand all our errors, and need to be cleansed from our secret faults (Ps. 19:12).

MEEKNESS. The meek spirit acts gently toward others. This is the strength of Christ channeled through the Christian as he patiently bears injury. It is this spirit that enables a man to have a calm temper under provocation; he will be "slow to wrath" (Jas. 1:19); he will give the soft answer that turneth away wrath" (Prov. 15:1). It can be readily seen that this spirit will give much aid and encouragement to unity among brethren.

LONGSUFFERING. It is this disposition that leads us to suppress our anger. It describes the Christian's attitude toward the errors, faults, and weaknesses of others. This spirit is of great importance in the church where there may be frequent collisions of opinion, or interest, or feeling, and it waits with patience till the passionate or obstinate see their way to a more Christlike course.

FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER. Christians are to bear with each other's infirmities, to cover each other's weaknesses, and to pity each other's frailties. When we begin to

practice such forbearance toward one another, we will begin to understand what God has done for us. God "commended his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). The best members of the church are imperfect in belief, sympathies, and conduct; hence mutual forbearance is necessary in order to maintain unity. He who feels disposed to quarrel with every fault of his brethren may spend his time in doing nothing else.

BROTHERLY LOVE. Love is the healer of discords. No hand but hers can bring harmony out of the discordant notes that are now sounded in our brotherhood. It is well to remember Pliny's report to the Roman Emperor that the distinguishing mark of the Christians was that they loved one another. It would be even better if we remember the words of our Lord, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Let us also recall, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing" (I Cor. 13:2). Our divisions and strife and bitterness cut at the very heart of the gospel. Sometime ago I was talking with a brother who said, "I want nothing to do with you or anyone else who believes in . . ." What bothered and disheartened me was not the difference in our concept of Biblical teaching, but the statement, "I want nothing to do with you," for whatever the difficulties may be, Christians must have a great deal to do with each other.

These virtues—lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, loving forbearance—quiet, unpretending, unshowy are amongst the best means for promoting true unity in the church of our Lord. Who is the most useful Christian? Not as a rule he who has the greatest genius, or the most brilliant talents, but he

who has the most of this quiet, loving, forbearing spirit. The world may do without its Niagaras, whose thundering roar and majestic rush excite the amazement of man, but it cannot spare the thousand rivulets that glide unseen and unheard every moment through the earth, imparting life and beauty wherever they go. And so the church may, if necessary, do without its men of splendid abilities, but it cannot do without its men of tender, loving forbearing souls.

ACTION YOU CAN TAKE

The Restoration Movement began as an effort to unite all Christians into one body. Now the heirs of that movement have ended up divided themselves. Have we lost sight of our purpose and forgotten our goal? How did brethren who love the Lord and revere his word ever come to be cast in the role of enemies rather than as children of the same Father? Shall we allow our shameful division to continue? What can we do? There are several possibilities.

1. *We can do nothing.* We can continue to ignore one another. Each segment of the division can assume that its position is the right position and refuse to rethink the issues among us. We can piously admit that division is wrong and contrary to the will of God, but place the blame on the other fellow and leave the fence mending to him. We all want unity, but on the basis of our conviction. If those terms are not met, we will go our way, and they can go theirs. Most of us have at one time or another thought and uttered the words of the soldiers guarding the crucified Lord, "let us not tear his seamless coat," but we have never been consistent enough to respect the seamless coat of our Lord—or our pledge for unity. Instead, we, like the gambling Roman soldiers on Calvary, cast our lots of self-seeking conversations. And when

we see that the coat of Jesus cannot become ours in the way we want it, then we rend it asunder.

2. If ignoring one another doesn't seem to be the best solution, we can attack each other in our sermons, church bulletins and religious papers. We can challenge to new debates. The only thing wrong with these procedures is that they have not worked. They have engendered enmity and strife. Instead of bringing us together, they have widened the gap between us.

3. We can talk about unity, and this we are beginning to do. This is progress! The fact that we are beginning to talk in terms of unity rather than division is encouraging. However, it will do little good to incessantly talk unity unless at some point we get action into the picture. Unity is such a shining goal, and lends itself so readily to high-sounding eloquence, that talking about it may well become an unconscious substitute for difficult action. It is time to take some action. Those who have been born again, who love the Lord, and who reverence his word should not be cast in the role of enemies, for they are brethren.

4. If ignoring one another, attacking one another, or talking with one another has not produced unity, what will? Most of us have found this to be an extremely difficult question because we see no answer save the surrender of one group to the other. Is this necessarily true? Could we not take a long stride toward unity by simply recognizing all of those who are "in Christ" as our brethren and treating them as such—extending fellowship in every point save that where conscience is involved. But would this be unity? Wouldn't we still be divided? Can there be unity in diversity? Let us see.

TWO KINDS OF UNITY

1. There is a unity of relationship into which we enter when we become Christians. Our obedience to the gospel brings us into the family of God. Is it not true that every man who has been "born of the water and of the spirit" (John 3:5), is in God's family? Is it not also true that every man who has God as his Father is also a brother to each other? Paul also speaks of this relationship in Ephesians 4:4-6. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, and one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all." Every Christian is a member of the one body, is directed by the one spirit, and enjoys the one hope. They have acknowledged the one Lord, have received the one faith, and have been joined to Christ in one baptism. They all are children of the one God, who is Father of them all, which makes them all brothers. This is a unity that exists among all the Christians of the world and is bestowed by the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:3). This unity is not based on unanimity of belief or freedom from doctrinal error, but upon our relationship to God and Christ. All who have believed in Christ, turned from sin, and been immersed for remission of sins are in Christ and brethren one with another. We "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the *household of God*, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:19,20). "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10). We, "who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace . . ." (Eph. 2:13). Let us then "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to main-

tain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:103 RSV).

What about those differences? They are still there. Recognizing and treating one another as brethren will not eliminate the problem of the orphan home, Bible class, communion cup, instrument, etc. They will be there as intensely as before. This move says nothing about the right or wrong of these things. They still must be settled on the basis of Biblical teaching. We must still decide how much of these issues are matters of faith and matters of opinion and of human reasoning. This move simply declares that fellowship in Christ is possible among brethren even though they differ. This will free us to work together in those areas where these differences are not a factor. It recognizes that any of us can be mistaken in our understanding of a passage, and that the family relationship is more important than the different conclusions honest brethren have drawn. It would also enable us to heed Paul’s admonition, “Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye” (Rom. 14:1).

But how long could we continue with such differences? I do not know. From the beginning of the Restoration Movement until now there have been many differing views about many subjects, but these were not pushed to division. In almost every issue of every brotherhood paper there are good Christian men on opposing sides of Biblical questions. We differ today about the part a Christian can play in war, the indwelling of the Spirit, eating in church buildings, integration, and a host of other things; but we have continued, despite these differences, to regard one another as brethren. The church of the first century had similar problems with circumcision, the second coming of Christ, eating meats, mixing the law with the gospel, observing days, the resurrec-

tion, and others, but they did not become matters for dividing the church. Let us look at the next unity spoken of in the New Testament because it will throw some light upon this question of how long we can live with our differing views.

2. The second unity spoken of in the New Testament is a unity of understanding. Paul says,

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13).

This oneness of understanding comes with our spiritual maturity. It does not belong to babes. It is a matter of spiritual growth. This unity of understanding will come as we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. When a man comes into Christ he obligates himself to accept all the truth of Christ as it becomes known to him. The ultimate aim is unity of faith, a full knowledge of the Son of God, and the perfect man. This will require time and study. In the meantime, the strong will have to bear the infirmities of the weak.

Although the historic position of the restorers is not our absolute plumb line, their voices may still be heard with profit in the realm of concepts and principles. Thomas Campbell in his historic “Declaration and Address” stated the following in propositions six through nine:

“That although inferences and deductions from Scripture premises, when fairly inferred, may be truly called the doctrine of God’s holy word, yet are they not formally

binding upon the consciences of Christians farther than they perceive the connection, and evidently see that they are so; for their faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power and veracity of God. Therefore, no such deductions can be made terms of communion, but do properly belong to the after and progressive edification of the church. [Note particularly this last sentence].

That although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of Divine truths, and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient, and the more full and explicit they be for those purposes, the better; yet, as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning, and of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion; unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment, or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers.

That as it is not necessary that persons should have a particular knowledge or distinct apprehension of all Divinely-revealed truths in order to entitle them to a place in the church; neither should they, for this purpose, be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge . . .”¹

Thomas Campbell thus recognized that freedom from error or complete understanding and agreement on all questions would never be realized in the church for there would always be little children, young men, and fathers. Let us also remember that some questions which divide us are not

¹ Alexander Campbell, *Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell*, published 1861, (Cincinnati, Ohio, H.S. Bosworth) pp. 49, 50.

matters of explicit revelation but involve deductions that some good men do not perceive. Can we not well classify these as matters which properly belong to the “after and progressive edification of the church.”

THE CHALLENGE IS YOURS

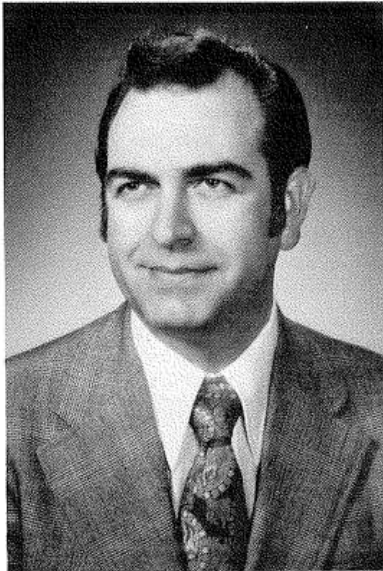
This, beloved, is a challenge to you to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Unity is our responsibility. It is fitting that you make the Master’s prayer, “That they all might be one,” your prayer as well. I do not know what course you may take, but as for me, I shall seek to be an instrument of unity and not division. Unity will be beyond our reach only if we do not believe in its possibility. It is waiting to be claimed by those who have the courage to lay hold of it. It begins with you.

JESUS DIED FOR ME

Johnny Jackson

Johnny Jackson was born in Collingsworth County, Texas, on August 4, 1933. His early life was spent in Grayson and Dallas counties. Following his graduation from high school in 1951, he entered Draughon's Business College in Dallas. Upon completion of his work there he attended Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee, for one year. Further work was done at Christian College of the Southwest (now Dallas Campus of Abilene Christian College), Dallas Christian College, and the University of Houston.

He preached his first sermon while in high school and entered into full time local work in April, 1954, at Pottsboro, Texas. His other local works in Texas have been with the following churches: Morton Street in Denison, 1955-58; Abrams Road in Richardson, 1958-64; Southside in Amarillo, 1964-66; Central in Houston, 1966-69. Since July, 1969, he has been with the, South MacArthur church in Irving.



For the past 18 years he has conducted numerous meetings. His meeting work has taken him into 15 states and Australia. In 1965 he was invited to preach in a campaign in Brisbane, Australia, and returned to preach in a second campaign in Melbourne, Australia, in 1967. In the summer of 1972 he was co-host for a tour to Europe and the Holy Land.

The South MacArthur church for which he preaches is a new congregation which resulted from the merger of two

Irving churches, the East Side church and the South Delaware church (for which he began preaching in 1969). The South MacArthur church now has under construction a 3,000 seat auditorium and church plant.

In June, 1953, Jackson married the former Nancy Howdeshell of Howe, Texas. They have four children: Danny, 18, a freshman at ACC; Stephen, 17, a senior at Irving High; Luanne, 15, a sophomore at Irving High; and Lauree, 11, a fifth grader.

Text: Matthew 27:11-35

“And when I think that God his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.”

“... the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). That marvelous truth had changed the life of Paul. No less has it been the basis for the change experienced by all of us in our spiritual pilgrimage. The cross remains the drawing power of God (John 12:32-33). It is the only power that can break our hardened hearts and cause our stubborn wills to yield to our Maker’s call. The cross is the only lasting motivational force for the righteous life. It prompts all obedience to a loving Father, or at least all submission which is truly worthy to be called obedience. It is that love which will not let us go! The religion of Jesus will never be more real to us until we come to accept this blessed truth: Jesus died for us!

It will be our purpose in this lesson to trace once more the steps of Jesus that ended at the cross. Regretfully, but truthfully, we sing, “Tell me the story often, for I forget so

soon . . ." Hopefully, the blessed glory of the cross will live for us once more. Prayerfully, O God, open to our poor sinful hearts a deeper meaning of those words, "Jesus died for me!"

In his birth, even his name would tell of his saving mission (Matt. 1:21). But you could go back before his birth, back to the prophets who foretold of his suffering (Luke 24:26). Walk daily with him during his ministry and you will learn that the cross was ever with him (Matt. 16:21). But for our purpose we begin with that last night of our Lord's life. He is in the very shadow of Calvary. "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death . . ." (Matt. 26:38). The shadow of the cross looms near. His human nature cries out. He shrinks from that dreaded ordeal. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Three times those words were uttered! Those words were accompanied by loud cries and tears (Heb. 5:7). Jesus knew what was involved in the death of the cross! He begged his Father to save humanity in some other way . . . if some other way were possible! But as rich and inexhaustible as were the Divine resources, there was no other way!

"Not the labors of my hands can fulfill the law's demands,
 Could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no languor
 know,
 These for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou
 alone!"

The mob, led by Judas, comes now for Jesus. They come for him with swords and staves as though for a common criminal. The moist kiss of betrayal is placed upon Jesus's face. "Hail, Master," Judas cries. The word "kissed" in the original is in the imperfect tense, the tense of repeated action. We would feel far more disgust for Judas were it not

for the fact that we have repeatedly betrayed the Master for far less than he! They bound Jesus and led him away.

The series of ordeals that were to terminate in the cross begin. They took Jesus first to Annas, who was the ex-high priest and father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest. Usually the Jewish high priest would serve until death, but the Romans had deposed Annas and made Caiaphas high priest in his stead. But the Jews still looked upon Annas as the lawful priest and Jesus was first brought before him.

Annas begins his questioning of Jesus. First he asks about his disciples. Perhaps this was an attempt to embarrass Jesus. His disciples had fled upon his arrest. They had forsaken him. So Annas taunts him. Tell us about your disciples! Are they many? Are they loyal to you? Where are they now? Then he asks Jesus about his doctrine. Just what is it you claim to do and what are your claims for yourself?

Jesus responded that he had always spoken openly to the world. His teaching had been in the synagogue and in the temple. Since his teaching had been public, not in secret, all Annas had to do to find out what he had taught was to ask those who had heard him! John tells us that when Jesus had thus answered Annas, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Annas then sent Jesus bound to Caiaphas.

While the exact order of events of those early hours may be difficult to determine, it would seem that Jesus went to

the house of Caiaphas and later, as early as possible after daylight, he was brought before the entire council or the Sanhedrin. Now the Sanhedrin was the Jewish supreme court. It was made up of seventy-one members, though all may not have been present at Jesus's trial. They will now sit in judgment upon Christ. The creature will now judge the Creator!

Caiaphas had brought before the council all the evidence he and his henchmen could muster. Witnesses whose testimony had been bought and paid for were brought. They swore to the lies that had been placed in their mouths. But their testimony was conflicting and even Caiaphas could see the obvious—no case could really be made against Jesus! Perhaps there were some of the Sanhedrin who were not as prejudiced as he. He must get some testimony that would convince the council and secure their verdict against Christ, but he dares not call yet for any verdict on the basis of the self-evident lies and testimony of the false witnesses. Finally, as a final effort, Caiaphas puts Christ on oath and says, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus must answer and he does so. He states plainly that he is the Son of God. Caiaphas falls back in astonishment. The high priest tears his robe in outraged piety and turns to the Sanhedrin, saying, "He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?" It is a moment of triumph for Caiaphas. He feels sure of the sympathy of the most conservative member of that council. Caiaphas is sure that Jesus has condemned himself out of his own mouth. He has claimed to be the Son of God! It is no longer hearsay! You heard him say it! "What is your judgment?" The Sanhedrin answers, "He deserves death!" "And they all condemned him as deserving death" (Mark 14:64). The verdict of death was given because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God!

In his book, *The Passover Plot*, Dr. Hugh J. Schonfield said: "If he (Jesus) had not presented himself as a claimant of the throne of Israel and a menace to national security, he would have been completely ignored by the Sanhedrin."¹ But let it be noted that it was for his claim to be the Son of God that Jesus was sentenced to die by the council! His alleged crime was blasphemy, and he would die for saying that he was the Son of God!

Having condemned Jesus, they began to abuse and mock him. They spat in his face. They blindfolded him and then slapped him, saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?" They did this in mockery of his claim to be divine!

But though the council has condemned Jesus to death, the authority of the Roman courts must be secured before he can be lawfully put to death. The Jews could not carry out the death penalty. Roman law now denied them that right. They must now go before the Roman procurator of Judea and get him to sign the death warrant. Now the procurator, or governor, of Judea was Pontius Pilate.

The Jews first attempted to get Pilate to sign the warrant on their sentence without his examining Christ. But Pilate went out unto them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" The Jews answered evasively, "If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over." Why did they not say, "Blasphemy! His crime is blasphemy!"? Had they done so, Pilate would have laughed them

¹ Dr. Hugh J. Schonfield, *The Passover Plot*, (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1967), p. 130.

to scorn, for blasphemy was no violation of Roman law! Pilate could sense the envy of the Jewish leaders. He will have nothing to do with these Jews and their quarrels. "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." But the Jews will not be put off so easily. They do not have the power to put the man to death lawfully, and it is his death they would secure. They responded, therefore, to Pilate, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

But Pilate must have an accusation, some basis for a trial. The Jews thus began to accuse Jesus, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king" (Luke 23:2). Blasphemy was no violation of Roman law, but sedition was. Pilate will question Jesus. The whole idea must have appeared as a monstrous joke to Pilate. The idea that this pathetic figure, spit dripping from his face, other marks of abuse evident on his head, obviously alone and without friend—the idea that his man could think himself a king and a rival of Caesar was almost too ridiculous to consider. But Pilate will question him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" Pilate asks. Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" "Am I a Jew?" screams Pilate. "Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me." In other words, Pilate says, "Of course I do not think you are a king. It is your people who say that you claim to be a king!" Then, seeking to probe into the real point of difference between Jesus and the religious leaders, Pilate asks, "What have you done?"

Jesus then proceeds to explain to Pilate about his kingship. "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the

world" (John 18:36). A king whose kingdom is not of the world! "So you are a king?" Pilate asks incredulously. Jesus answers affirmatively: "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice." "What is truth?" exclaims Pilate. A man who believes his mission is to be a king, but his kingship does not have to do with the world, and now he will discuss philosophy! Pilate is convinced that the man is no threat to Caesar. He goes out again to the Jews and announces his verdict: "I find no crime in him!" Jesus is acquitted!

But the Jews will not accept this judgment! Urgently they cry, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place." Galilee! When Pilate heard them mention Galilee, he asked whether Jesus was a Galilean. Upon being told that he was, Pilate then ordered Jesus sent to Herod, to whose jurisdiction he belonged and who was himself in Jerusalem at that time (Luke 23:7). Luke tells us that when Herod saw Jesus he was glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see some sign done by him (Luke 23:8). Herod questioned Jesus at length. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing Jesus. Jesus would talk to Pilate but to Herod he would say nothing! Then Herod and his soldiers abuse the Christ. This "king" will do no signs to amuse them; he will not even answer Herod's questions! Jesus becomes an object of jest to Herod and his men. The accusation is that he claims to be a king. So they array him in a gorgeous robe. Luke says Herod and his soldiers treated Jesus with contempt and mocked him. The older version says they "set him at nought," literally they made him count as nothing, they treated him with utter contempt, as a zero. "You claim to be a king, but you're nothing!" Herod then

orders Jesus sent back to Pilate. Luke also adds that Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day over these proceedings, and that before this they had been at enmity with each other. Herod was grateful to Pilate. He felt that Pilate had shared this amusement with him!

But it was no laughing matter with Pilate! He would be done with this Jesus. Pilate called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him; neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Behold, nothing deserving death has been done by him; I will therefore chastise him and release him." Now, if Jesus were innocent there was no justification for the chastisement, but this was Pilate's concession to the Jews. He would have the man whipped if they were determined to see blood, but then he would release him! But the Jews will not be appeased. Only the Galilean's death will satisfy!

Pilate is faced with a dilemma. He cannot afford to antagonize the Jews, and yet he knows that Jesus is innocent. To make matters worse, it was somewhere at this point that he received word from his wife that he should have nothing to do with this righteous man and that she had suffered much over him in a dream. Then, Pilate remembers that at the feast he was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted (Matt. 27:17). Here was Pilate's way out! Only this feast would be different. He would not offer them their choice of any prisoner whom they wanted. He would shut up their choice between this Jesus and . . . "Who is the worst prisoner we have?" The word comes back, "Barabbas!" Now here was a notorious prisoner (Mt. 27:16). He was a

rebel who had committed murder in the insurrection (Mark 15:7). He was a robber (John 18:40). No question of his guilt. No charges here that could not be sustained! Bring Barabbas and put him alongside the Galilean. Let them choose between Barabbas and Jesus. This seems to have been Pilate's plan and he had no doubt that it would work.

Have you ever tried to visualize that scene? See the soldiers as they bring Barabbas. He is chained, but bold and defiant. From such a hardened criminal is it too much to imagine curses being hurled against his captors and his fate? I do not visualize Barabbas humble and suppliant, begging for mercy, but one who rather dares Rome to do its worst! There he stands, the condemned, the guilty, the sinner, by the side of the Master, the innocent, the sinless, the one against whom not a charge can be sustained. Pilate now triumphantly addresses the mob. Between two such men, he reasons, the choice must be obvious. He will free himself from his dilemma. "Who do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:17). But immediately the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus (Matt. 27:20). They stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas, not Jesus! Pilate had not reckoned sufficiently with the hatred of these leaders for the Galilean. Now, Pilate speaks again to the people, demanding, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" Now came the answer, "Barabbas." Then they all began to cry out, "Away with this man and release to us Barabbas" (Luke 23:18). Pilate can scarcely believe his ears. Can human hate be so strong? Can their envy blind all sense of justice? Has reason vacated and all semblance of sanity fled? Must the innocent die in the place of the guilty? The voice of Pilate is heavy with distress. "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" Back came the answer,

“Let him be crucified.” “Why, what evil has he done?” demands Pilate. But the mob shouted the more, “Crucify him!” Even a third time Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no crime deserving death; I will therefore chastise him and release him.” But Luke says they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed! (Luke 23:23). Pilate feels the crowd must be satisfied (Mark 15:15). So Pilate gave sentence that their demand should be granted. “He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, whom they asked for; but Jesus he delivered up to their will” (Luke 23:25).

Oh, look again upon that scene as Barabbas is released. See the chains removed and the condemned criminal told that he is free to go. Watch the amazement on his face as he looks at Jesus who will die in his place. Here in miniature is a picture of the redemption of the world! You and I are Barabbas! We stood condemned! Our guilt could not be denied! But Jesus will die in our place. The innocent will be crucified for the guilty. The sinless will be treated as though he were a sinner. And because he took our place, we are released. The charges against us are dropped. He bears our guilt. The chains and bondage of a life of wrongdoing are removed!

The cross looms nearer now for Jesus. First, there is the scourge.

The Roman scourging was one of the most brutal punishments to which a man could be subjected. There was no such thing as mercy for the condemned. The victim's hands were tied and stretched above his head. His body was stripped of clothing, and then he would be beaten as long as it pleased

the soldiers to whip him. The Jews had a limit of 40 stripes and generally stopped at 39 for fear of passing the limit of their law, but no such limitation was placed upon the Romans. The instruments used? There was the handle with leather strands going out from it. Those strands were loaded with bits of metal pieces, of bone and stone or anything sharp that would add to the pain and brutality inflicted. See the whip come down across the naked body of the victim! Pieces of flesh would be torn away, cuts were opened in the skin and sometimes the victims came from the scourging with their eyes and teeth knocked out. Many victims died beneath the brutality of that Roman whip. In our mind's eye we see Jesus being thus whipped. The sharp crack of the whip making contact with his body is heard again, and again. And I remember that Isaiah, more than 700 years before, said, "but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

After they scourged Jesus the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the praetorium, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. There he stands stripped before the bloodthirsty group! They shamed the Lord of Glory! But they are not finished with him yet. "This man claims to be king! A king must have a robe!" So they put a scarlet robe upon him. "You can't have a king without a crown!" Make him a crown of thorns and crush it on his brow. "If he's a king he must have a scepter!" Put a reed in his right hand! Then humanity at its lowest kneels in mockery before him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" "And they spat upon him, and took the reed and struck him on the head" (Matt. 27:30).

While Jesus is still wearing the crown of thorns and the

purple robe he is returned to Pilate. Pilate goes out to the people and says, "Behold, I am bringing him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" Look at him! You wanted blood! Look at it! Perhaps Pilate intended to suggest that the scourging was sufficient. Let it end there! But when the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him." In other words, if you are determined to kill him regardless of my judgment, why even bring him to me in the first place? Why go through the formality of law if you will act lawlessly? Now such implications of Pilate's statement stung the self-righteous Jews. They must vindicate their actions. Their deeds must be justified! The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God!" (John 19:7).

And I imagine that as soon as that statement was made a hand was clasped over a mouth. All these other charges, and the accusations, and now the truth is allowed to slip as the Jews seek to justify their demands for his death. Here was his real crime to the Jews: "He has made himself the Son of God!" When Pilate heard these words, he was the more afraid! (John 19:8). There is something so different about this man, about this whole ordeal. He may not know much of the gods, but he will not have part in the death of the son of any kind of a god! Pilate enters again into the praetorium and says to Jesus, "Where are you from?" You claimed to be a king! Do you also claim to be the son of God? The gospels do not record it, but Paul tells Timothy that in Jesus's testimony before Pontius Pilate he made the good confession! (1 Tim. 6:13). Jesus answered, "Yes, I am the Son of God!"

Pilate again sought to release Christ. The Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar." Pilate sees it is hopeless. But there must be some sort of exoneration. He calls for a basin of water and washes his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

Jesus is now brought forth, his own clothes on him, and they are ready to lead him away to crucify him. Pilate will now taunt the Jews. "Here is your king!" They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

The procession goes out of the city toward Golgotha, the place of a skull.

John tells us that Jesus bore his own cross (John 19:17). The synoptics say that Simon of Cyrene, a man who was coming in from the country, was compelled to carry the cross behind Jesus. It would seem that as they went out of the city Jesus became unable to bear the cross further. There had been the sleepless night, the ordeals of the trials; he had been without food or drink, and the resulting weakness from loss of blood following the scourging. Little wonder that the heavy beam could not be borne the full distance to Golgotha. Oh, I have thought of that scene. The scripture says there followed in that procession a great multitude of people. Can you see the crowd part and make way for the Galilean as he bears the cross? His hair is matted with his own blood; his face is battered and bruised. His clothes cling to his body, held tightly to him by his own sweat and blood. See his steps

become shorter and slower. Hear his labored breathing. He hesitates. His knees buckle. Finally, he sinks to his knees and then the heavy cross beam pins him to the ground. I like to think that, had I been there, I would have rushed to his side saying, "Lord, you have done enough for me. Let me carry the cross for you!" And yet, how few of us have in our lives truly undertaken the bearing of the cross of Jesus!

Arriving at Calvary, the process of crucifixion was speedily carried out. The victim was stripped of his clothing, laid back upon the cross and then the nails were driven through the hands and feet.

Even while on the cross his tormentors would not leave him alone. Those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Oh, who can fathom the depths of divine love! From the cross, through his agony, Jesus looked down upon these representative of the human family in their blindness, their ignorance, their rejection, and prayed for them with these words: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." These are the words, Luke tells us, that "Jesus said" (Luke 23:24). The tense of the verb rendered "said" is in the imperfect tense in the original. That tells us that Jesus continued to speak these words, "forgive them . . . forgive them."

There were other words from the cross in addition to the

word of forgiveness. They all reveal the Saviour's heart! There was the word of assurance to the dying, penitent thief (Luke 23:43). There was the word of comfort spoken concerning his mother's care (John 19:26, 27). And then came the cry of desolation!

Jesus was crucified by mid-morning. At noon a heavy darkness fell over the whole land. The sun in its noonday brightness refused to shine on the scene of the suffering saviour. That darkness lingered for three hours. During this time Jesus was silent. That silence was broken at the ninth hour, or three o'clock, when the pathetic cry of desolation was uttered. Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" How can we grasp the full significance of those words? Opinions differ here. These words are viewed and explained in various ways. But as for me the meaning is this: the presence of the Father was withdrawn from His Son! He who had no sin became sin for us! He bore our sins in his body on the tree! Sin separates from God and on the cross Jesus took the sins of the world upon himself. And if it be true that God did actually withdraw from the Son, the full depths of desolation expressed in that cry can scarcely be fathomed by human minds! "Was it for crimes that I had done he groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity! Grace unknown! And love beyond degree!"

Again, he speaks from the cross. "I thirst," the word of suffering. These words remind us of the humanity of Jesus. They remind us of the horrible reality of the suffering he went through, and how intense that suffering was. There was the severe inflammation, the bleeding of the jagged wounds, the traumatic fever, the strained position of the body and the insufferable thirst. The wounds swelled about the rough nails,

and the torn and lacerated tendons and nerves caused excruciating agony. The arteries of the head and stomach were surcharged with blood and a terrific throbbing headache ensued. The victims of crucifixion literally died a thousand deaths. The burden of pain was relentless till at last bodily forces were exhausted and the victim sank to unconsciousness and death. Then, the sixth word from the cross, "It is finished." The reference is not to the fact that his agony is now ending, nor that the malice and the hatred and the pain heaped upon him is done and set aside forever. He is not merely saying good-bye to life as so many brave men have done before and since. These are the words of a Saviour whose work has been accomplished. It was on the cross that the purpose of God was finalized! All through the pages of God's Word we see God's redemptive plan at work. The prophets spoke God's messages, the teachers unfolded God's truths, the law was given—then came Jesus, and with his death the great transaction of God in our behalf was done. Oh, praise God for the perfection and completion of our redemption that was secured at the cross! It is finished! In the original language there is only one word, although it is translated by three words in English—"It is finished." Three times this particular word is used in the Greek version of the Bible. We find it in Genesis, concerning the creation (Gen. 2:1). In his Book of Revelation, the apostle John used the same word, "It is done . . ." (Rev. 21:5, 6). Between these two great events, we hear the word coming from the lips of Jesus on the cross, "It is done!" The atonement is made! Satisfaction has been made for a violated law! "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other . . ." (Psalm 85:10). God can now be both just and the justifier! (Romans 3:26). It is finished! The prophecy of a Saviour that runs through the Old Testament is fulfilled to perfection. The high priest of the Old Testament went into

the Holy of Holies once a year, where he made two sacrifices, one for the sins of the people, and one for himself, because he too was a sinner. Year after year, he would go behind those curtains, away from the eyes of the people. The crowds watched Jesus as he was made the offering for their sins, going behind the curtain of darkness to offer himself to God as the perfect Sacrifice "once for all" (Heb. 9:26). In the intimacy of the Holy of Holies, the priest confessed his own sins, the sins of a mortal man—the imperfect priest, behind the veil, offered a sacrifice. But now came one on Calvary's tree in plain open view, sacrificed as the Lamb without spot or blemish. Even as Jesus died, the hand of God reached over the temple in Jerusalem and ripped the veil of the temple—not from the bottom to the top, but from the top to the bottom. The rent began too high for human hands and took a force stronger than yokes of oxen. Only the hand of God could tear the veil, for the perfect Priest was also the dying sacrifice on the altar of the cross! Christ confessed not his own sins, for he had none, but your sins and mine. Now the veil of the temple was opened and Christ has become our great high priest! He has destroyed the power of sin and the power of death! It is finished! The word in the original has the same root as our words "telephone," "television," "telegraph"—something projected across a distance. Jesus that day finished salvation and projected it throughout all the ages, needing only to be appropriated by the sons and daughters of a dying race!

And then, a loud cry from the cross, the seventh and last word, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" "And having said this, he breathed his last" (Luke 23:46).

"And when I think that God, his son not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in; that on the cross, my

burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin!"

There is no tragedy comparable to the cross in human history. We are overwhelmed with grief in reading and retelling the story. What is this that has happened? How could such a thing be? How could such a one as the pure and holy Jesus thus be rejected and executed? The blessed hands stretched forth in goodness and in love are now torn and mangled. The feet so given to errands of mercy are now so cruelly pierced. The brow upon which rested so beautifully the peace of God has been mangled with thorns. The lips from which fell words of grace are now parched and swollen. The eyes that were filled with love, compassion and tears of sympathy are now glazed in death.

What is this? What is the meaning of Calvary? Is it a mere historical tragedy like Socrates drinking the hemlock or Julius Caesar murdered at the feet of the statue of Pompey or Abraham Lincoln assassinated in Ford's theater? What is this that has happened? Is it a defeat or a failure? Albert Schweitzer so characterized it in his famous theological volume entitled *The Quest For the Historical Jesus*. Albert Schweitzer said that Jesus expected the kingdom of heaven to descend apocalyptically, suddenly, dramatically. When it did not do so, Schweitzer said that the Lord Jesus died in frustration, disillusionment and despair. Is it true? Is this the meaning of the cross?

When we turn to the Scriptures for God's explanation of the cruel death of Jesus we find the sublime reason for the sufferings of our Lord. The death of Christ is the atonement for sins toward which all time and eternity did move. The cross is the redemption wrought out by God through the

ages. Jesus is the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. The pouring out of his blood is the sealing of the new covenant by which we receive remission for sins. The cross is the answer to the guilty conscience of mankind. The death of Christ is the sacrifice of our Passover that we might be delivered from judgment. The cross is the blood of the day of atonement sprinkled on the mercy seat. The death of Christ is the suffering servant of Isaiah by whose stripes we are healed. The offering of Christ is the triumph of the seed of the woman who shall crush Satan's head. The death of Christ is the sacrifice of the body fashioned by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin, a body that was made for the sacrifice of our sins. The cross is the final consummation of God's plan of salvation. The way of atonement, the way of forgiveness of sin, has been brought to our fallen souls in the love, grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus on the cross!

What is the meaning of the cross? The cross was the judgment of God upon our sins! Who crucified the Lord Jesus? To whom shall we assign the guilt? The Vatican Council of the 1960's sought to release the Jews from the stigma of being responsible for his death! What shall we say? Whose fault is it that Jesus died? Who crucified the Lord Jesus? The truth is that we all had a part in his cross! We are all guilty! It must be recognized that our sins pressed upon his brow the crown of thorns; our sins nailed him to the tree.

But if it were our sins that nailed him to the tree, our iniquities that caused him such suffering, our whole soul and life and heart responds: "Oh, God, out of love for thee and gratitude for thee and what you did for us in Jesus, we give our whole lives away. They belong to thee. Thou hast bought us. Thine we are. We are not our own. We are bought with a price and that price is the blood of the Son of God."

Oh, the cross of the Son of God is to be the heart and substance of our preaching! In it alone is our hope! Little wonder that Paul cried, "We preach Christ crucified!" And again, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The cross is the heart of the gospel of our Lord! It is so defined by the apostle (I Cor. 15:1ff). He died for me! Take away that truth from my heart and I will return to my sinful, selfish ways, caring for neither God nor man. But as long as I remember how much he loved me and what he did for me at the cross, I am his willing slave for life. What else can we do but return love for such love he has shown? (I John 4:19). Little wonder that we cry with John Newton of old:

In evil long, long I took delight, unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new object struck my sight that stopped my wild career!

I saw One hanging on a cross in agony and blood!
He fixed his languid eye on me as near that cross I stood!

Oh, never to my latest breath can I forget that look—
It seemed to charge me with his death though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and owned my guilt and drove me to despair.
I knew my sins his blood had shed and helped to nail him there.

A second look he gave, which said: 'I freely all forgive!
This blood is for thy ransom paid. I died that thou mightest live.'

"That thou mightest live!" That's why he died for me! From
the depths of redeemed hearts we sing:

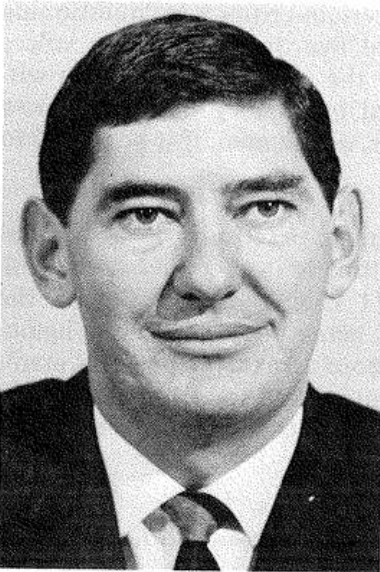
Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too sma
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!

Amen!

JESUS THE SON OF GOD

Phillip Steyn

Phillip and Lucy Steyn were two of the first people Don Gardner converted in Pretoria South Africa. At the end of 1956 they enrolled at Freed Hardeman College. Due to a child's health they prematurely left for Abilene in December of 1957. Brother Steyn graduated from A.C.C. in 1960. While in school he preached for several congregations within driving distance. During the summer months he worked with the Peak and Eastside congregation in Dallas. Upon graduation the Garland Road congregation sponsored the Steyn family to establish a work in Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State. The work there was started in November, 1960. Today the church there owns a very valuable property in a new suburb of Universitas. With an auditorium to seat 250 plus and 18 class-rooms the church has appropriate space for future growth. The local congregation partially supports brother Steyn and fully supports every other phase of the work there. The Bloemfontein



congregation is practically Afrikaans speaking. All services are conducted in both official languages, English and Afrikaans. The Steyn family has three children and a foster daughter. Estelle is a first year student at the University of the Orange Free State, Marle (foster child) is a third year student—Bsc. Nursing at the University. Phillip Jnr. graduates from high school in December. Douwene Mit, a 5th grader.

“And the disciples went, and did even as Jesus appointed them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their garments; and he sat thereon. And the most part of the multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut branches from the trees, and spread them in the way. And the multitudes that went before him, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee” (Matt. 21:6-11).

When Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem, “all the city was stirred saying, Who is this?” (Matt. 21:10). All of the city of Jerusalem said it then, and all the world has said it ever since. For nineteen hundred years this figure upon a donkey has haunted the thinking and the conscience of mankind. There was a time when certain critics were questioning the fact that this man ever did live on earth. These voices have virtually been silenced by the scriptures “that bear witness of Him” (John 5:39), and by history itself, “. . . now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call Him a man.”¹

Who is this man? Mankind is practically in agreement that this is no ordinary man, “this is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee” (Matt. 21:11), who walked upon the earth and who brought into being the Christian religion. There is also practically unanimous agreement that this man’s influence has been the most potent and uplifting of all influences in shaping and moulding life in the western world:

¹See Josephus, F., *Antiquities of the Jews*, (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Co., 1957), p. 534.

“After nearly two thousand years the impact is not at all spent, but daily there are people who have tremendous revolutionary experiences which they associate with Jesus Christ . . . The personality of Jesus is without parallel. It is unique and incomparable.”²

This Jesus has changed the flow of history, split it in two so that every event is now dated with reference to His birth, either before or after. Amid the clash and turmoil of every age His power has been a dominating force. His influence is so great that even today multitudes would be glad to die for Him. Who is this man? they asked at the street corners of Jerusalem a long time ago; and it is no academic speculation or theological theorizing that renews the question today. Back to the Bible we must go and contemplate the picture that confronts us there. Who is He of whom such amazing things are spoken?

“He is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village, and that a despised one. He worked in a carpenter’s shop for thirty years, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a really big city. He never travelled, except in His infancy, more than two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He had no credentials but himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them betrayed Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a Cross between

²See Ramm, B., *Protestant Christian Evidences*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p. 171.

two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth, His seamless robe. When He was dead, He was taken down from the cross and laid in a borrowed grave, through the courtesy of a friend. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone, and today Jesus is the centerpiece of the human race, and the leader of all human progress. I am well within the mark when I say that all the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that were ever built, all the parliaments that have ever sat, and all the kings that have ever ruled put together have not affected the life of man upon his earth like this one solitary personality.

All time dates from His birth, and it is impossible to understand or interpret the progress of human civilization in any nation on earth apart from His influence. Slowly through the ages man is coming to realize that the greatest necessity in the world is not water, iron, gold, food and clothing, or even nitrate in the soil; but rather Christ enshrined in human hearts, thoughts and motives."³

The Divine qualities of Jesus are revealed in the New Testament, where by inspiration they have been recorded for all posterity: ". . . these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). Who is this man? This is the Christ the Son of God! Peter speaks representatively for all the writers when on that day in Caesarea Philippi he confessed: "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). The fact that Jesus never did rebuke anyone for such a profound statement affirms that Jesus asserted on His own part the claim to deity. Be it the demoniacs who cry out, "What have we to do with thee, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the

³See Baxter, B. B. *I Believe Because . . .* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 220.

time?" (Matt. 8:29); or the centurion witnessing the crucifixion who exclaims, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39), Jesus for obvious reasons never did rebuke any such statement. His claim to deity had much to do with the death that He finally suffered on the cross. Sonship and oneness with the Father the Jews understood to imply Divinity. When on one occasion they took up stones to stone Him, He said, "Many good works have I showed you from the Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?" they replied, "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:32,33). If Jesus were not Divine, the words that He spoke in John chapters fourteen to sixteen would truly convict Him of blasphemy. These are the words of God to man! Take for example the exhortation for them to "believe in God, believe also in me." The apostles are to have the same type of faith in Him as they have in God. Also, the statements that teach "I and the Father are one . . ." Enough said! "If Jesus is no God, He is a deceiver or is self-deceived, and in either case, Christ, if not God, is not good."⁴

Jesus is the Son of God! This truth the witnesses of the ascension soon preached on every corner in Jerusalem. It is a powerful message, "cutting the Jews to the quick." It causes open hostility, but converts multitudes, even priests (Acts 6:7), and leaders of the synagogue like Paul. These in turn continue with the same truth "and straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). Before too long it is a message that is echoed in the

⁴ See Boettner, L. *Studies in Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1957), p. 141

passages of the royal household in Rome itself (Acts 28:31). Here is a message of absolute truth! Here man “stands upon holy ground” for Jesus is unique and incomparable.

“Christ is the world’s Light, he and none other
Born in our darkness, he became our brother.
If we have seen him, we have seen the Father:
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world’s Peace, he and none other;
No man can serve him and despise his brother.
Who else unites us, one in God the Father?
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world’s Life, he and none other;
Sold once for silver, murdered here our brother—
He, who redeems us, reigns with God the Father;
Glory to God on high.

Give God the glory, God and none other;
Give God the glory, Sprit, Son and Father;
Give God the glory, God in man my brother:
Glory to God on high”⁵

Jesus is unique. There has never been another to compare with him. His contemporaries spoke truth in declaring: “It was never so seen in Israel”. (Matt. 9:33). “We never saw it on this fashion” (Mk. 2:12). “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46).

Share with me a few salient thoughts that testify to His sonship.

⁵ See Green, P. F. Hymn—*The Uniqueness of Christ*, The Expository Times, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, May 1972), p. 249.

CHRIST, the light of the world

Christ is the world's Light, he and none other;
 Born in our darkness, he became our brother.
 If we have seen him, we have seen the Father
 Glory to God on high.

“Again, therefore, Jesus spoke unto them saying, I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). The emphatic use of I am, simply means, “I and I alone, I and no other am the light of the world.”⁶ Here the idea of light is that of an active power which conquers the opposing power called darkness. Light, the universal symbol of holiness. Darkness the universal symbol and expression of sin and death. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light but came that he might bear witness of the light. There was a true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man” (John 1:4-9).

In the prolog John makes it clear that the light is the Word, the logos, the true revealer of God to “every man.” In ordinary language a word reveals the idea which is behind it; what a word is to an idea Christ is to God. That is, a revealer. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”

⁶ See Lenski R.C.H. *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1942), p. 593

(John 1:18). Christ is the embodiment of the truth, revealing the Father to His creatures. In Christ's teachings all the plans, purposes, and promises of God are brought into a final focus and an absolute realization. In Him the fulness of the Father shines forth. This "Light" is no half-measure, no fraction, but perfect completeness in every word, thought and action. He is the "very reflection of His glory, and the very image of His substance" (Hebrews 1:3). As Israel of old followed the pillar of fire which dispelled the darkness of night during the desert journeys, so Christ, the light of the world, dispels the darkness of sin. He exemplified the absolute truth of the Father in all of His dealings with mankind. "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). In this context the audience was interested in pointing a finger of blame and condemnation to this man or his parents. But Jesus, the true light, is not interested in this, but rather, that the "works of God might be displayed." Consequently the spittle, the clay, and the visit to the pool of Siloam gives sight. This is symbolical of the true gift of redemption "that the true light coming into the world has brought for every man."

As Christ the true light reveals the Father, so all those who "catch" this light reflect it in their lives. "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Paul has a description of his own conversion which suggests some of the splendour associated with the light. "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). We who walk as "children of light" are called for a special, exclusive and God-given purpose: "... ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light . . ." (1 Peter 2:9). The words "show

forth” mean literally, “to proclaim, to publish abroad, and thus reveals the obligation of all children of God to herald abroad and give wide publicity to the excellencies (virtues . . .), as exhibited in the plan of salvation.”⁷

The blind man in John 9 did exactly this! When the harsh words of neighbours, Pharisees, and even the doubts of parents arose, he had an answer to silence all, “. . . one thing I do know, that, whereas, I was blind, now I see.” (John 9:25). It must be clear to all of us how this man, even when “put from the synagogue” worshipped the Lord. Would it be wrong to say “that this man went everywhere glorifying Christ?” I believe not! What would we do if we were blind and healed? In spite of opposition, this man continued. Possibly this sheds light on the behaviour of the Christian. Many do not understand why one “walking in the light” is so filled with the Gospel. It is not difficult to fathom: Christ the Light of the world has revealed the truth of the Father—“the truth that will make you free” (John 8:32). With this light shining in our hearts, we by His splendour and strength walk in this marvellous light. Regardless of opposition or persecution, the child of light preaches, reflects this great message to a lost and dying world. Thanks be to God that many are “receiving the Light of the world” as it is projected by His church.

Christ the peace of the world

Christ is the world's Peace, he and none other;
 NO man can serve him and despise his brother.
 Who else unites us, one in God the Father?
 Glory to God on high.

⁷ See Woods Guy N. *A Commentary on the N. T. Epistles of Peter John, and Jude* (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1957), p. 64

Christ is the world's peace! "Peace is a condition of freedom from disturbance, whether outwardly, as of a nation from war or enemies, or inwardly, with the soul."⁸

The Prophet Isaiah from a distance of seven hundred years could see and reveal some of the glories that would come to pass during the "last days" (Isa. 2:4). His voice fell on hearts that knew very little peace, yet this voice held a glorious promise that "divine peace" would be prominent during the reign of the Messiah. "... for a child will be born . . . the Prince of Peace . . ." (Isa. 9:6). In all the Bible Christ stands unique, for he is the only one so connected with peace. In the New Testament there is an expectancy of peace through His coming. When the angel of the Lord reveals to the shepherds the birth of the Christ, "... suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." (Luke 2:13-14). From a standpoint of the world, this Jesus knew very little peace. Yet in Him do we see the highest spiritual fulfillment of peace, a peace that He revealed unto the world. At the end of a "peace-less" life he leaves a promise of the rich legacy of peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). This peace we recognize to be the "inward peace of the soul," regardless of the conditions on the outside. This is His peace, our legacy, He wills for us to have even today. The message that the "Prince of Peace" brought into this world gives a peace "that passeth all understanding."

⁸ See Walker, W. L. "Peace", *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, IV, p. 2293.

It gives a peace that nothing else in the world can give. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). This is "the word which he sent unto the children of Israel preaching the good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). Jesus the peace giver redeems man by His blood (1 Peter 1:18-19), turns away the wrath of God, provides freedom from the guilt of sin, and provides for man the means whereby he can live in peace and harmony with the Father.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the peace of Christ disrupts the so called "peace of the world." "A Fire I came to throw upon the earth . . . and how I wish it were already kindled . . ." (Luke 12:49). This turbulent statement refers to the entire mission of Christ on earth. This mission of peace did start a conflagration on earth, one that has never subsided and will burn until the end of time. "The offense of the cross has set the world ablaze." "Don't think that I came to give peace on earth, no: I tell you, nothing but division" (Luke 12:51). This dramatic question and answer from Jesus makes it plain what he meant by His mission, "to throw fire on earth." By implication some supposed that Jesus came to bring peace, just peace on earth. "Freedom from disturbance and enemies." Did not Isaiah foretell his peace? Surely this is the prince of peace. When Jesus refers to "peace on earth" this takes in the "world of man," and the effect of His mission on this world is quite the opposite of peace. It is division. If Jesus had not come then the "earth," the world of man, would have had an undisturbed condition of sin until the day of its doom. But He came to take away the guilt of sin by the cross. There was at once division! No doubt many of us here today have seen this happen in the lives of even loved ones. Possibly you have lost family because of the gospel of peace. Be assured "There is no man that hath left

house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time . . . and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

In South Africa where the Lord's church is only one step away from traditionalism and denominationalism, we frequently witness that one's "foes are of his own household" due to the gospel of peace. Late one night after having had several study classes with a family, the lady of the house ordered me out of their house, in no uncertain terms. Upon asking her for an explanation, she replied: "Mr. Steyn, ever since we have studied the Bible with you we have no peace in our home. My husband is not the same man anymore, we disagree on so many things; it never was like this before." The truth of the matter was that the husband started to give a "lip service" to truth and wanted to make it a "life service." She then was not willing, thus division. Thanks be to God that they later both had real peace by being justified by faith. Christ is the world's Peace. Only He can give real inner peace!

Christ the Life of the world

Christ is the world's Life, he and none other;
Sold once for silver, murdered here our brother.
He who redeems us reigns with God the Father.
Glory to God on high.

The prevailing reference in the New Testament to the word "Life" is to those "Activities which are the expression of fellowship with God and Jesus Christ, eternal life."⁹ It would

⁹ See Reeve, J. J. "Life", *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, III. p. 1889.

appear as though John gives the fullest and richest teaching regarding "life." He begins his gospel by connecting the mission of Jesus with "life," without giving any description of that life: "In him was life and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4). That he uses this word in a spiritual sense is seen in the believer "who passed from death to life" (John 5:24). Central to John's understanding of Jesus' mission was his statement, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10). This life is likened to that of the Father.¹⁰ "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" (John 5:26). The one reason John wrote was for "life," "... these things are written that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). "This is life eternal that they should know thee the only true God and him whom thou didst send; even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). This eternal life comes through a knowledge of both the Father and the Son. As used here knowledge is more than a mere intellectual perception or understanding, it is, "to have intimate personal experience."¹¹ Take for example the case of Paul himself. This young Pharisee, who was one of the best brains of his day, no doubt knew of Christ. If he had not personally seen and heard the Master, he received knowledge via others. The Pharisees kept a watchful eye on Jesus through all His personal ministry. They had agents going hither and thither to spy on Him. They cross-examined men and women who claimed Jesus healed them. They had been the prime movers in His trial, condemnation and death. Hence little doubt that certain knowledge reached Paul via

¹⁰ See Roberts, J. W. *The Letters of John*, (Austin, Texas: R. B. Sweet Co., 1968), p. 26.

¹¹ See Lenski *Op Cit.* p. 1121.

the Pharisaic channels. Furthermore, Paul must have had some knowledge of Jesus by observation. He observed all the beauty, truth and goodness that was focused in the lives of early Christians like Stephen, whose third last utterance, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56), must have been impressive to all who heard it. But intellectual knowledge is not enough! However, after his conversion (Acts 9,22), he believes in full and "knows" Jesus as the Christ, the long promised Messiah. And such was the theme of his first sermon, "... and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20).

Jesus communicates the "abundant life" to those that hear His voice, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25). Here John is not speaking about the future life but the present, an existing condition. The statements that those who hear His voice "shall live" has to do with that hour that is "coming and now is." To John the Christian enjoys eternal life here and now! In John 5:24, "eternal life" is to have passed out of death into life. Also, John uses the terms of "life" and "eternal life" interchangeably. "The believer has been given a divine newness of life which is qualitatively related to the life of God himself (2 Peter 1:4, 'partakers of the Divine Nature.')¹²

Much of what the "abundant life" meant to Paul is focused in his famous words "I have been crucified with Christ;

¹² See Roberts J. W. *Op. Cit.* p. 27.

and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20). What a difference in this man's life! "I have been crucified with Christ." The old man of sin is dead, what's more "I die daily!" "Christ liveth in me!" Jesus is now alive to Paul. Not just alive, but now Christ bears him along from within. He is Paul's motive and new-found power. He gives the apostle all the power to live triumphantly. The attitude of Paul towards the cross is now an expression of eternal gratitude; for the cross is the supreme revelation of love. "Abundant life" is to Paul a continual surrender to this Divine love. It is a life of "faith" and this faith proves to be synonymous with suffering and many hardships (2 Cor. 11:24f). This is a life that reveals to Paul that the world is waiting for the Gospel. He knew that he had found truth, truth that all men everywhere were seeking, for lack of which Jew and Gentile were perishing. Thus he gives God the glory in living as a slave for the gospel. In this "abundant life" he brings forth the visible brightness and splendour of the Son of God in his own life. No one short of Divinity could cause such a revolution in the life of man as did Jesus in Paul's life; and does in the life of so many throughout the world today.

One of the most pathetic sentences ever spoken by human lips came from the Roman Pontius Pilate. On a day when his subordinates were worried and uneasy, these Jews wanted him to do the impossible. Jesus was dead and buried—finished—put away in a tomb: "Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead . ." (Matt. 27:64). What a thing to ask of any man, the impossible itself. "Ye have a guard; go make it as sure as ye can . ." (verse 65). These are

pathetic words, for no guard, yea nobody and nothing in all the world could stop the resurrection of Jesus! By this he was "declared to be the Son of God with power . ." (Rom. 1:4). What would we say to one who attempts to stop or deviate a "blue Norther" from hitting the Abilene area? Could Pilate or any other man control the forces of nature so that the seasonal changes do not occur? This could more easily be done than for the guard to keep the body of Christ in the tomb! As no living force could do this, prevent or deter it, so it is that no force can keep back the influence of Christ upon the world today.

Christ is the Son of God with power! He is the Light of the world. When a heart is filled with this "light" peace prevails; and an "abundant life" results. There is no power that can bind a life where these Divine forces exist.

JESUS IS LORD

Robert Shank

Twenty-two years a Baptist minister, Robert Shank is the author of *LIFE IN THE SON: A STUDY OF THE DOCTRINE OF PERSISTENCE*. Published in 1960 and now in a ninth printing, the book has sold over 30,000 copies throughout the world and is widely accepted as the definitive work on the long-debated question of apostasy. He is also the author of a companion volume, *ELECT IN THE SON: A STUDY OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION*, which refutes the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation. Published in 1970, it is already in a third printing. His work *JESUS, HIS STORY*, a harmony of the Gospels as a single narrative in contemporary English, with notes, is used by numerous colleges as a reading text for courses in the life of Christ.

Now a member of the South National Church of Christ in Spring-



field, Missouri, Mr. Shank gives his time to visiting lectureships, gospel meetings, and his writing, and is associated with Brother Marvin Bryant in reaching denominational ministers with the restoration plea as the path to unity in the faith, serving under the eldership of the Alpine Hills Church of Christ, Mobile, Alabama.

All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all!

By the decree of God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ is Lord of all. "God has highly exalted him," declared the Apostle Paul, "and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:9-11 RSV).

I. Jesus is Lord of Creation.

In the prologue of his Gospel, John writes (1:11) that Jesus "came to his own, and his own received him not." In the Greek text there is a distinction which is not apparent in most English translations: Jesus "came to his own things, and his own people received him not." When he appeared on earth, Jesus indeed came to "his own things": he came to his own creation, for in his eternal pre-existence as the Word, "He was in the beginning with God, and all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:2, 3).

All nature was subject to his will and command in the days of his flesh. "What manner of man is this," exclaimed his apostles, "that even the winds and the sea obey him!" (Matt. 8:27). He is Lord of creation. "By him were all things created," wrote Paul to the Colossians, "and by him all things consist" (1:16, 17). Quoting from Psalm 102, the writer to the Hebrews applies the words to Jesus:

Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They will perish, but

thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end (1:10-12 RSV).

The writer then inquires, "But to what angel has [God] ever said, 'Sit at my right hand till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?'" (1:13 RSV). He then declares (2:5-8 RSV),

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou carest for him? Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death . . .

. . . by faith we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, waiting for the time when "everything shall be in subjection to him . . . in the world to come."

Earth and even heaven itself shall give way to "a new heaven and a new earth" and the merger of the new Jerusalem with the new earth, where God shall dwell among his people for ever (Rev. 21:1-3). There shall be in it the throne of God and of the Lamb, who is both "the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star . . . Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev. 22:16, 13)—with God the Father Almighty, Lord for ever of heaven and earth, Lord of all creation from eternity to eternity!

II. Jesus is Lord of History.

Someone has well said that "history is His story." It is altogether appropriate that men date time by the birth of the Son whom God sent forth "when the fulness of the time was come" (Gal. 4:4). The appearing of the Word in flesh to dwell among men full of grace and truth—the appearing of Jesus, born Son of God and Son of Man—is the pivot of the ages and the centuries of time. All that went before was prelude, moving toward the divine event of the incarnation and the redemptive sojourn among men of the Word made flesh.

As ages past anticipated his first appearing, so the present age anticipates the return of "this same Jesus, who shall so come in like manner as men saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Thus the present age is also prelude. All history and the procession of human events move toward one divine event: the triumphant coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory and righteous judgment. In the final book of the Holy Canon, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, John records the vision given to him of that transcendent divine event:

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! (Rev. 19:11-16 RSV)

As recorded in Matthew's Gospel (25:31-34), the King of Kings and Lord of Lords described his coming in power, glory, and righteous judgment in this way:

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world

Nothing can change the ultimate outcome of human history, fixed by the decree of God—an outcome for which we pray whenever we pray the prayer Christ taught his disciples to pray: “Thy kingdom come.”

In one sense, a very real sense, Christ's kingdom is in the world today in his churches—a kingdom into which all are brought who are delivered from the power of darkness through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:13). But in another sense, equally real, the kingdom is yet to come in its full dimension and triumph. Paul speaks of the kingdom as yet future, awaiting the coming of Christ, declaring that “the Lord Jesus Christ . . . shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:1). He exhorted the disciples to “continue in the faith” that they may yet “enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22, cf. Col. 1:21-23). Peter exhorts the brethren to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure,” that they may enter “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:10, 11). Jesus spoke of the faithful as inheriting the kingdom at his coming (Matt. 25:31-34), thus

predicating the kingdom as yet future in its fuller dimension. In the glorious Revelation of Jesus Christ, John writes,

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give thanks to thee, Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth." (11:15-18 RSV)

Behold, he comes—to judge the living and the dead, to reward his servants, to destroy the destroyers of the earth, to make the kingdom of the world his own, to reign for ever and ever.

History is indeed His story. The centuries, the years, the days all move toward the moment of the triumphant cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes!"

He comes, the Lord of History whose holy, humble birth as Son of God and Son of Man is the pivot of history past! He comes, the Lord of History whose triumphant return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords is the divine event toward which history now moves—the coming of the Lord of Glory, to reign with God the Father Almighty for ever and ever!

III. Jesus is Lord of the Holy Scriptures.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,"

wrote John in Revelation (19:10). The life-breath of the Holy Scriptures, Christ is the central figure in the sacred volume. From Genesis through Revelation, he appears throughout the pages of the Bible—the center and the circumference of all of Holy Writ.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, famed preacher of London Tabernacle in nineteenth-century England, once was asked how he prepared his sermons. “I take a passage anywhere in the Bible,” he said, “and proceed directly to Christ and preach him.” From Genesis through Revelation, in symbols and in substance, in prophecy and in fulfillment, in types and in reality appears one whose historical name is Jesus.

In its human aspect, the Old Testament is the literary product of some thirty men who lived over a period of about twelve centuries. The 39 books treat many things—the origin of all things other than the eternal triune God, the creation of the universe and the earth and of angels and mankind, the beginnings of human history and the history of nations and of a Nation called to the service of God for the blessing of all mankind.

Because there is more than the human aspect of the Holy Scriptures, because the Bible is God’s word to man rather than men’s words about God and man’s quest for God, woven throughout the various books from Genesis through Malachi are the scarlet and the gold threads of the prophetic tapestry of the Messiah. Appearing to ten of the Eleven and others of his disciples on the evening of his resurrection day, the risen Jesus explained the mysteries of his sufferings and death and resurrection. Luke records that

... he said to them, “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written

about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures . . . (24:44, 45 RSV)

Central in all the literature of the Old Testament are the things "written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms" concerning the Messiah, who came into humanity and into history in the person of Jesus.

In the solemn final hours with his apostles on the eve of his betrayal, sufferings and death, Jesus said, "the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26 RSV). Herein lay the promise of Scripture to come—a promise which found its fulfillment in the writing of the four Gospels and in the others of the 27 books of the New Testament. Concerning things written in his Gospel, John wrote, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:31). John's words apply as well to the other Gospels. Christ is the center of the Gospels, and he is equally the central figure of the Book of Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation.

Just as history is his story, so the Bible is his story. The Old Testament declares that the Messiah will come. The Gospels tell us that he came, "the way, the truth, and the life." The Acts and the Epistles tell us what his coming means to us. The Revelation tells us he will come again in triumph, power, and glory, to reign for ever with God the Father.

Jesus is Lord of the Scriptures because he himself breathed life into the Scriptures and made them authentic. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when Peter sought to defend

him, Jesus said, "Put away your sword . . . Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" (Matt. 26:53 RSV) Two things are evident from our Lord's words. First, Christ was completely voluntary in his decision to die, and the Father would have concurred in his decision to the contrary. Secondly, the final integrity of the Scriptures depended on Christ's decision to die. Thus, by his own free choice and at great cost to himself, Jesus gave to the Holy Scriptures their eternal authenticity. He is indeed Lord of the Holy Scriptures.

IV. Jesus is Lord of the Church.

I speak not of "churches," but of "the church" as Paul wrote of it to the Ephesians, "the church which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all" (1:22, 23).

Reigning over the church is one Lord, and within the church, the "one body," is a unity that requires neither to be attained nor kept. Paul indeed wrote to the Ephesians of attaining "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (4:13) and of keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:3). But concerning the church in its primary New Testament definition, there is a unity that requires neither to be attained nor kept. There is a unity that requires only to be recognized, for it is intrinsic in "the church which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all . . . the whole family in heaven and earth . . . a holy temple in the Lord . . . built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 1:22, 23; 3:15; 2:21, 22).

This is the church Christ loved, and for which he gave

himself—the church he promised to build, with himself as the sure foundation—the church to which he is adding daily those who are saved, and the church which, when at last it is complete, he shall present to himself as his own holy bride, a glorious church without spot or blemish.

Lord of the church, Jesus is also Lord of “the churches,” the local congregations of baptized believers. None among us is to be called “master,” for one is our Master, even Christ, and all of us are brethren in him.

On the Isle of Patmos, the aged John was at worship “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” when he suddenly heard “a loud voice like a trumpet” (Rev. 1:10). He turned to see “one like the Son of Man” standing among seven golden lampstands. As Christ disclosed to John, the seven lampstands were the seven churches of Asia, to whom John was commissioned to write. Thus the risen Christ was standing in the midst of his churches. Where even two or three are gathered in his name, there he is in their midst, as he promised (Matt. 18:20). Christ still walks among his churches, the Lord of the Church and of all the churches.

V. Jesus is Lord of the Harvest.

As Lord of the Church, Jesus has appointed the task in which his churches must be occupied until he comes again.

Appearing among his apostles and other disciples in the evening of the day of his resurrection, Jesus said, “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46, 47). The assignment is

to preach the good news of the forgiveness of sins in his name "among all nations."

Mark records that Jesus said to them, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be condemned" (16:15, 16). The assignment is to preach the gospel in "all the world . . . to every person."

On a later occasion, the risen Lord appeared to his disciples in Galilee—perhaps on this occasion to "above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Cor. 15:6). Matthew tells us that he said to them, "All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (28:18-20). The assignment is to teach "all nations . . . to the end of the age."

The assignment was not alone to the apostles, nor alone to the apostles and their contemporaries. The assignment is to Christ's church and to all his churches "to the end of the age."

To some, Christ gives particular responsibilities. To his apostles, on the eve of his betrayal and sufferings, Jesus said, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). Following his resurrection he said to his apostles and other disciples gathered in a room in Jerusalem, "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). To Peter, the risen Lord disclosed the life of service and the particular death to which he appointed him. He called Saul to

his holy service and sent him to preach the gospel among the gentiles. Christ still calls men today to particular tasks of his choosing—not by spectacular signs or demonstrations, but by quiet conviction.

But the great world task of preaching the gospel, by Christ's appointment, falls to all his churches to the end of the age. All who are included in his churches share the responsibility and are to contribute to the performance of the task in various ways. There is a place for everyone to serve in the great age-long task. It must be the concern of all his disciples until he comes again, the great Lord of the Harvest.

In the harvest field there is work to do,
For the grain is ripe, and the reapers few;
And the Master's voice bids the workers true
Heed the call that He gives today.

Labor on, labor on, keep the bright reward in view.
For the Master has said He will strength renew:
Labor on till the close of day.

VI. Jesus is the Lord of Life.

In the prologue of his Gospel, John wrote of Jesus Christ, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (1:4). In a world of darkness, a world made dark by sin, there is but one light: Jesus Christ and the promise of the forgiveness of sins and of life everlasting in him.

"I am the light of the world," said Jesus. "He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). He came, he said, that men might have life—more abundant and eternal. This life men have only

through Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life,” apart from whom no man comes to the Father (John 14:6).

He who came that men might have life died to bring to man the blessing of life everlasting. “This is the record,” wrote John, “that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son of God has not life. These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:11-13).

Life in its full dimension, life the Bible speaks of as “eternal life,” exists intrinsically only in the divine Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This life man shares only through Jesus Christ, who came to share that life with men through his own death, resurrection, and perpetual intercession. He is himself “the life,” and we have no life in the real sense apart from him.

In the synagogue at Capernaum, on the day following his miraculous feeding of five thousand, Jesus spoke of bread more essential than bread for the body:

I am the bread of life . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh . . . For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world . . . Truly, Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life . . . he who eats this bread will live for ever. (From John 6 RSV)

“I am he that liveth, and was dead.” said the risen Christ to his servant John on the Isle of Patmos, “and behold, I am

alive for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18). He who died to save us from our sins and rose again to live in the power of endless life is the Lord of Life. He shares his everlasting life with all who trust and follow him.

VII. Jesus is the Lord of His Disciples.

"You call me Master and Lord," said Jesus to the apostles in the upper room, "and you say well, for so I am" (John 13:13). Just as Jesus is Lord of the Church and of all his churches, so is he Lord of every disciple, every individual Christian.

Though it is true that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done" or can do that he saves us (Titus 3:5), it is also true that obedience and discipleship are intrinsic aspects of saving faith. Christ is "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). Obedience as an aspect of saving faith is apparent in most English translations of John 3:36, though the King James translation fails at this point. The New American Standard New Testament, for example, is faithful to the Greek text: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

While certainly we are not saved by the perfection of our discipleship or by the merits of our personal achievements as disciples, still it is true that we cannot accept Jesus as Savior and reject him as Lord. His gospel is not only to be believed; it is also to be obeyed. The Christian life involves not only trust in Christ; it also involves personal commitment to him and to his kingdom.

Though our discipleship and our service for Christ may seem small and unworthy as compared with that of Paul or the other apostles or other men whose names we revere, still may our discipleship be real and sincere, as indeed it must be if our faith is real.

We have considered the lordship of Jesus over his churches. Jesus is truly Lord over his churches only as he is Lord over the hearts and lives of those of whom his churches are composed. Let us not be guilty of saying, "Lord, Lord," while failing to do the things he has commanded. Not everyone who calls him "Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of the Father (Matt. 7:21).

When the body of President Lincoln lay in state in Washington, in the long line of mourners who passed by the casket there came a black woman, an ex-slave, with her little son. Standing by the casket, she lifted the lad to view the body of the martyred President. "Son," she said, "take a long, long look. That man died for you."

When in faith we kneel before his cross and look up and behold through tear-filled eyes Christ's broken, lifeless body, then do we say, "That Man died for me." And when in faith we stand before the risen Christ and behold him—the Lord of Life—in the triumph of his resurrection and his everlasting conquest over sin and death, and when we hear him say to us as to Thomas of long ago, "Be not faithless, but believing," then must we exclaim with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God!"

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the Fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace
And crown Him Lord of all!

JESUS IN THE MARKETPLACE

Carl Mitchell

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Several times in the Gospels the marketplace figures prominently in the experiences and teachings of Jesus. Even more often events clearly occur there, although not explicitly stated. Our English word "marketplace" comes from the Greek word *agora*. W. E. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* gives the following definition:

... In general an open space in a town (akin to *ageiro'*, to bring together), became applied, according to papyri evidences, to a variety of things, e.g., a judicial assembly, a market, or even supplies, provisions (Moulton and Milligan, *Vocab.*). In the N. T. it denotes a place of assembly, a public-place or forum, a market-place. A variety of circumstances connected with it as a public-gathering place, is mentioned, e.g., business dealings such as the hiring of labourers, Matt. 20:3; the buying and selling of goods, Mark 7:4 (involving risk of pollution); the games of children, Matt. 11:16; Luke 7:32; exchange of greetings, Matt. 23:7; Mark 12:38; Luke 11:43; 20:46; the holding of trials, Acts 16:19; public discussions, Acts 17:17. Mark 6:56 records the bringing of the sick there. The word always carries with it the idea of publicity, in contrast to private circumstances.

It is exactly this idea that the life and work of Jesus were public that I wish to stress. As Paul told Agrippa, the things pertaining to Christ's activities and death were not "done in a corner." In consequence of this, I wish to further emphasize that the life of the follower of Christ individually and of followers of Christ collectively in the church must be just as public and open.

The prophetic statements in the Old Testament informed the Jews well ahead that the Messiah would not be a secretive sort of an individual, and even depicted all the major events of his life, so that as these were observed, they would know he was the Christ. Especially in Isaiah chapter 53 do we note the openness of the happenings that would surround the Lord. He would not fail to be recognized because he was hidden from them, but because their own preconceptions would make him unacceptable to them. As John so beautifully records, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:14).

When one goes into the New Testament account of Jesus' life it is clear that his mission unfolded at the cross-roads and in the public squares of the cities of Palestine. Disciples were called from their boats and fish nets along the Sea of Galilee, from the tax tables in public office, from the streets of Bethsaida, and from the shade of a fig tree. Christ went where the people were. He mixed with them intimately, sharing their food, their lodging and their miseries. When a city, captivated by his teaching and particularly his miraculous works, attempted to detain him, this blessed ambassador from heaven insisted that he must go on yet to other cities (Luke 4:43). When John the baptizer sought a final confirmation that Jesus was the Christ, the answer sent back was that he preached to the poor, gave sight to the blind, and offered deliverance to the captives and to the oppressed (Luke 4:16-21).

Even the events of the suffering and death of Christ were very public. He was arrested by a mob, tried before the Jewish council, beaten before a crowd of soldiers, and was crucified on a public hill. At his resurrection the tomb was itself an open demonstration of his triumph over death. During the forty day period following his exodus from the grave Christ clearly displayed himself to many persons. Paul later writes that more than five hundred brethren saw him at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6). Peter sums up these and the other events of Christ's life in the initial announcement of the kingdom on Pentecost by saying, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know . . ." (Acts 2:23).

Not only was Christ's mission obviously developed before the eyes of the Jewish world, but he repeatedly made

it clear to his disciples that they too were to embrace a mission that would be public, even world-wide. In one parable he shows the king sending his messengers to the "thoroughfares" to invite persons to the marriage feast, whereupon the servants are said to have gone "out into the streets and gathered all whom they found" (Matthew 22:9-10). In another parable he spoke of a farmer who sowed good seed in his field. Christ then explained that the field in which the seed was to be sown was the world (Matthew 13:38). All five of the statements of the "great commission" underscore the urgency of a widespread declaration of the "good news" (Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8). Observe the use of such expressions as "all nations," "every creature," and "all the world."

The New Testament indicates that the first Christians were faithful in their fulfillment of Jesus' request that they spread his truth throughout the world. The Holy Spirit set the tone on Pentecost by manifesting his power in a manner that brought thousands of Jews together to see what was happening. Acts chapter 2 tells us that the newly-born church met daily in the temple area and from house to house. Both their lives and their meetings were plainly visible to those about them, and the force of the love of Jesus upon their conduct caused those "outside" to be filled with admiration.

As the disciples of Christ grew in number, synagogues, private homes, schools, artisan's workshops, and market-places became open forums where Christ was shared. Their success was so spectacular that even a "great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:6). This may have been the catalyst which set off the persecution that soon follows. In this persecution the members of the church in Jerusalem were driven out of the city, fleeing for their very

lives. Luke tells us that everywhere they went, they shared Christ (Acts 8:4). It is interesting that the apostles did not leave Jerusalem during the persecution, which emphasizes the fact that each Christian believed that he could and must tell others the "good news." Stephen Neill is correct in stating that what he calls "unprofessional missionaries" were the dynamic force in the rapid growth which follows.¹

It seems evident that this first period of advance is unparalleled in subsequent church history. In less than thirty years Paul could claim that "all creatures under heaven" had been evangelized (Colossians 1:23). Scholars differ as to how extensive an application to make of Paul's statement (although this writer takes it quite literally). What we do know is that against odds that seem insurmountable, the church thrived, until it is estimated that at the time of the edict of Constantine in 313 A.D., ten percent of the Roman Empire had embraced the faith.²

With the popularizing of Christianity following the action of Constantine, significant changes began to set in, changes which still cause us to suffer today. First the church passed from being a "people's church" to become the church of the Empire. In becoming popular, it became profane and weak. In its next phase of development, the church became the property of its professional leaders, the church of the priests, of the bishops, and eventually of the pope. Gradually all responsibility for outreach passed from the common mem-

¹ Neill, Stephen, *A History of Christian Missions*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964, p. 29.

² *Ibid.*, p. 44.

ber to the priestly class. Monestaries replaced homes as centers for teaching and instruction. It was only a short step to claim that the Bible content was beyond the understanding of all but the professionals, and an age of ignorance and superstition called the "dark ages" came into being. Reason gave way to force, and the popular church spread over the land by the power of the sword. Charlemagne gave the Saxons the choice of accepting baptism or being put to death.³

The Teutonic Knights worked effectively with the Dominicans in the conversion of the Wends, Prussians, and Lithuanians by forcing them to accept religious instruction, being permitted by the Catholic hierarchy to take all their property as a reward for their evangelistic zeal. Later they were made to give one-third of the sequestered property to the church and allowed to keep two-thirds.⁴

When Luther and others attempted to reform the Roman Catholic Church, one of the ideas they presented was that every believer was a priest. Therefore he must be personally enlightened in the Word of God, and must accept his share of the responsibility for the work of the church. The idea was sound, but in practice it has not worked out. As we look at the contemporary religious world it is clear that those who constitute it have for the most part been again defective and have followed the pattern of Rome rather than that of the New Testament. Howard Butt, Jr., makes an astute observation on the meaning of the popular protestant term "lay," as it differentiates from its companion expression, "clergy":

³ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms lists secular, temporal and profane as parallels to the term lay; while spiritual, religious, and sacred are given as contrasting words. I doubt if it takes deep religious psychoanalysis to see that the use of words points to a basic heresy that has been with us for years. What we have here is a heavy semantic hangover from the Roman Catholic concept of the priesthood. Luther's recapture of the concept of the priesthood of all believers has not yet influenced the dictionary.⁵

At this point some might say, "you have described catholicism and protestantism, but you have not described churches of Christ." I wish you were right! It appears to me that we are caught up rather securely in the traditional pattern. Except for instances that are far too infrequent, it does not appear that we are presenting very effectively the Christ of the marketplace. We often do have the Christ of the building, and while I am not opposed to buildings and believe they can be valuable tools, a building can become a trap for both us and Christ. The activities within the building can become an end within themselves rather than a preparation for service. In fact, we call the worship experience the "services" of the church, which may help obscure the idea that the true services of the church should occur in individual lives outside the building. It is only a short step to believing that a "good Christian" is one who attends all the services and doesn't do anything that would bring reproach upon Christ. Sometimes I have felt that our meetings together are like a pep rally with no game following. There are notable exceptions to what I have described, and yet it seems to me that too frequently we

⁵ Butt, Howard, Jr., "The Layman As A Witness," *Christianity Today*, Vol. XII, No. 23, Aug. 30, 1968, p. 10.

do not go forth to serve, but rather to wait until we can go into the building again. I believe every Christian should be at every meeting of the congregation, but I also am convinced that the main work of the church must be outside the building, actively occurring in every Christian life.

It also seems true that many times we have committed our responsibilities to the experts, so that we end up with the Christ of the preachers. Since the full-time worker usually has special training, it is easy to see him as the principal one who will do evangelistic work at home and abroad. The minister in his turn appears to be caught in another kind of trap. His duties may require first of all that he be in an office several hours during each day. In addition, he is expected to fulfill a "pastoral" function that will sometimes take most of the rest of his time. Consequently the member does no evangelistic work (since he thinks that this is accomplished through the support he gives the evangelist), while the minister has very little time left to evangelize since most of his efforts are directed toward the members and their needs. It is true that there are many exceptions to this picture, but it too often is the condition of the church, and is the reason why many congregations are not experiencing the growth they should and could experience. In my opinion, many preachers decide to leave full-time work, not because of the income, the frequent moves, or other purely physical reasons; but because of the impossible task they are given—the task of meeting the needs of individual members (often doing work that should be done by elders, deacons, and other members), and yet are expected to be the principal agent by which the church reaches out and expands in the community.

The solution of the problem is in the topic of this lecture. Jesus must be taken out of the building and the propa-

gation of His message no longer considered the exclusive charge of supported workers. Only in this way can each committed Christian return to proclaim Jesus in the marketplace. The church (its leaders and its members), must come to see success as God sees it, and as the church in its early history experienced it. The apostle Peter explained God's purpose in calling out His people:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9).

The church fulfills this ideal when it has an active membership dynamically sharing Christ with others; each member in his own way (as dictated by his talents, training, and opportunity), taking Christ into the marketplace. Every member is uniquely at the center of a particular world which revolves around him. He is in contact with persons and events in a way not shared by any other person. It is there in his individualized world that God expects him to preach Christ.

It is indeed an exciting thought that God has given every Christian a personalized world, his own surging, active marketplace. Note some of its characteristic components. It includes the home of which we are a part, our place of work or of education, the circle of friends we hold dear, the casual acquaintances we make from day to day, and the persons who live near us up and down our streets. It was to such a world that Christ indicated the Gadarene whom he had cleansed when he said, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19). When Christians have done this, the church has grown. When they have not, it tends to atrophy. I know we are fearful of many things, and this fear

keeps us from giving Christ away. Perhaps we are afraid of saying the wrong things, of not being able to answer questions that will be asked, and thus appearing ridiculous in the eyes of the world. Could it be that we are placing too much emphasis upon ourselves and not enough upon God's power to work through us and through His word? It is the gospel that is the power to save, and not the person. Even the gospel badly presented can still do good if the presentation is loyal to the Word. But . . . the gospel bottled up inside the Christian helps no one else at all! It would seem that if we really believe that those out of Christ are in a lost condition, and if we really love our neighbor as ourselves, we will overcome whatever barrier to tell a sin-sick and dying world that Jesus loves mankind, and that He has the power to save.

In addition, there are other marketplaces that may not be in the center of our lives, but they are nonetheless places teeming with people who need the Savior, people to whom we must go. In recent years there has been an exodus by many and particularly by the churches from the inner-city. In some instances it appears that Satan is left unchallenged to feed upon the wretched, the miserable, the lonely, and the heartbroken who seem to gravitate into such areas. In a number of cities we have great warriors whom Christ is using to turn the tide against the forces of evil. However, those involved are all too few, and reinforcements are badly needed.

The prisons of our land are filled to overflowing with persons whose records show their need of a Savior. I was thrilled recently to see in the Firm Foundation a picture of Don Dye who is supported by the Westbury congregation in Houston in a jail ministry involving the Harris County prison. In three years he has had contact with 10,000 persons, with

131 baptisms occurring during a recent period of a few months. May God bless him and this good church! Is there any reason why such ministries could not be undertaken all over our nation?

The same issue of the Firm Foundation told of the work being conducted by the church in Gainesville at the University of Florida. In four and a half years 450 persons have been baptized into Christ through their campus ministry. How wonderful! This is a ripe moment among young people. Many of them are wondering and asking if Christ really has something to offer. Most of them seem sick of the watered-down denominational approach to religion. The appeal to go back to the Bible strikes home to them. Why do we not have active programs on every campus in this nation?

Brother Paden and the great church at Sunset in Lubbock have been working diligently to get us to look at the marketplace of the world with which Christ needs to be shared. Ezekiel chapters 3 and 33 should be read often by every Christian. God has appointed us to be His watchmen. It is the Christian of today who must go and tell every person throughout the world of the love of God. Every unchallenged frontier of the world is an open scandal to the church of Jesus Christ. The "regions beyond" are just as dramatically beckoning to us today as they did to Paul in his day. The "woe" of God rests upon us if we do not preach Christ, just as it did upon Paul.

As a Christian psychologist I am convinced that many children of God are unhappy and stunted in their faith and consequently in their lives because they have made their religion a list of "don'ts" coupled with an occasional journey to a "church building." Some will continue to live an unhappy

Christian life and will hold on to the bitter end. Others will eventually become disgusted and drop out altogether. Hopefully, many will come to experience the joy of sharing Christ, and by giving themselves to others will begin to realize the deep sense of peace and happiness that comes from being God's person for God's business.

In conclusion, the words of Frank Mason North in the fourth stanza of the hymn *Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life*, capsulates very well the message that I have tried to express:

O Master, from the mountain side,
Make haste to heal these hearts of pain;
Among these restless throngs abide,
O tread the city's streets again.

Carl Mitchell
Pepperdine University

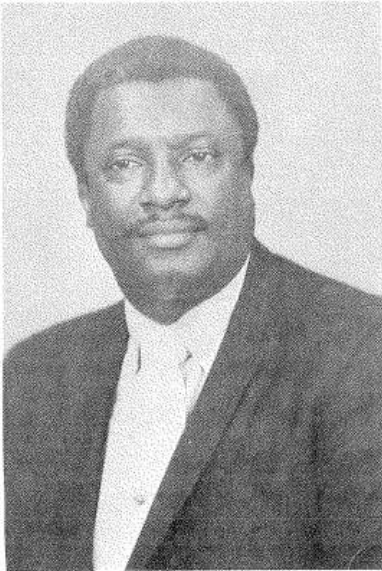
JESUS THE MAN

Nokomis Yeldell

Nokomis Yeldell was born in Eureka, Texas, in Navarro County, January 3, 1929, to Mr. and Mrs. Starling Yeldell. He was one of twelve children. He is married to the former Dollie Pearl Miller from Chatfield, Texas. The Yeldells have been married 25 years and have five children.

Schools attended by brother Yeldell include Eureka, Monford, and Emhouse. He also attended McMurry College in Abilene, Texas; Harding School of Religion, Memphis, Tennessee; and he studied at Abilene Christian college as an auditor.

In August, 1950, he began preaching at the Eleventh and Tonto Street Church of Christ in Phoenix, Arizona. He has done local work at the Shepherd Street Church of Christ in Mount Pleasant, Texas (3½ years); Abilene, Texas, at the Tenth and Treadaway Church of Christ (5½ years); and with the Vance Avenue Church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee, where he is presently working (13 years).



Even when we think of Jesus as a man, He is the only figure in history with no equal.

Homer, the Greek, was great, but we find his match in Vergil. Demosthenes, the silver-tongued orator, was magnificent, but is matched by Cicero. Edmond Burkes' impeach-

ment speech withered all the flowers in Hasting's garden, but it is equaled by Henry Grady. William Shakespeare, from whose pen words flowed like golden pollen from stems of shaken lilies, has his place challenged by Bacon. Tennyson in "Crossing the Bar" is equaled by Longfellow's "Psalm of Life." Alexander the Great conquers the world, but so does Ceasar. Napoleon was a great general, but is defeated at Waterloo by Wellington. Leonardo de Vinci was a master painter, but was driven to jealous tantrums by Michelangelo.

On and on we may go dealing with world greats, and for everyone there is an equal. But Jesus, the man, is without equal in past, present, and future history. If ever the term "Super Man" is applicable, it is with reference to Jesus; for you see indeed He was as a man Super Natural, for He did supernatural things with natural things in a natural world.

When Mary realized she was to give birth to Jesus, somehow she felt she had to tell her story. And the person she elected to visit was Elizabeth, her cousin, to tell her story. This is the way Mary expresses her inner feelings, Luke 1:46-56, "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent away empty. He hath holden His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and His seed forever."

It's even thrilling to think what was in Mary's heart when she held that heavenly child in her bosom. Painters, you know, have tried to tell the story in exquisite pictures which represent the mother on her knees before her child, who lies before her. She is rapt in adoration of Him, as she holds Him wrapped in swaddling clothes; she is lifting up her hands in homage; she is imploring His blessing and owning Him as Lord. While this is what art has seized upon, it is remarkable that there is not one word about that in the Bible. There we have the key to the mother's heart. We have the beautiful Psalm, called the "Magnificat," which she sang when she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

The great respect shown to and around Christ, points out the kind of man He was. He is the man that brings happiness to the family. Mary and Joseph were blessed because of Him. The wise men from the east led by a star show that world rulers, inventors, and educators should come to worship before Him. The shepherd tells how the common people should leave their materials to worship before Him.

The mystery of the incarnation, or the incarnate Christ, baffles many a mind, but it is a Bible fact and should be accepted by man without question. Paul said, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, Himself the man, Christ Jesus." It was in His humanity that Jesus worked out our salvation and it is in humanity that He mediates now. He didn't abandon His humanity when He left earth, no more than He abandoned His divinity when He left heaven to come to earth. Even though He emptied Himself of His heavenly culture, He was still the eternal one. Again, Paul said, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto Gentiles, believed on in the world and received up into Glory." Christ

was God, come down to us and as a man with the same temptations we have. He tasted of death for every man" (Heb. 2:17). He became like His brethren that He might be a merciful heavenly father. Wherever, whenever, or however we were tempted and are tempted, Christ shared in that or those temptations. This qualified Him for His saviorship. Hebrews 4:15 says, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

But at times His divine nature cried out and demanded to be heard. "I am the resurrection and the life." "I am the way, the truth and the Life." "I am Alpha and Omega." "I am He that liveth and was dead. Before Abraham was, I am." Paul in his great Philippian letter said, "He being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He refused to use His God or divine strength in dealing with His enemies. He could have spoken gold palaces into being, He could summon His heavenly army to fight His battles, but He didn't.

But in His manhood, He brought our redemption. Surely, there were many times His disciples didn't understand Him. What manner of man is this? Never man spake as this man. We have seen strange things today without really and fully using His divinity. He conquered all His foes and put them under His feet. Christ, the man, slept as we, ate as we, thirsted as we, hungered as we, laughed as we, and cried as we, suffered as we, was tempted as we, grew weary as we, faced His troubles unlike so many of us. When the time came He faced them head on. The paramount characteristic of Christianity lies in the personality of its blessed founder.

Hinduism is loyalty to an ideal. Confucianism is loyalty to a tradition. Shintoism is loyalty to a country. Islam is

loyalty to a code. Judaism is loyalty to a law. But Christianity is loyalty to a person, "The Man, Jesus Christ." One may at times think of Christianity without ritual law but never without Christ. It is a pity when the Church of Christ at times seems to forget the person of Christ. When He is taken out of the Church, only envy and strife are left. In the long centuries of history Christ is almost forgotten. We have made secondary things first and first things secondary. To take Christ out of the Church is like taking the Sun out of the sky. We find life so frustrating when we trust things and not the man, Jesus. We need this man in our lives or else we will be reprobates. I believe the greatest need of our day is to discover, or rediscover, Christ. Without Him, all gained is lost and all labor is in vain. Even the shadow of His cross shines with more glitter than the noon sun. Yes, the plaintive cry of the Greeks is still ours. Sirs, we would see Jesus. I want to make an appeal to your soul today. We understand so precious little of the life, Christ the man and His life. What Carlyle said is true, "Great men have short biographies." Jesus left no record, wrote no book, kept no diary, left no picture. He told the apostles the Holy Ghost would come and guide them into all truth.

All we know of Him is cramped into four brief books in front of the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John gave brief hints into His marvelous personality. Matthew suggests He was a teacher, Mark presents Him as a conqueror, Luke introduces Him as a great Doctor, and John brings Him forth as a Great Light. This is about all we know about Him. Yet more books, more poems, more pictures, more changes have come about because of Him than all greats put together.

Yes, the brief flashes of His life are soon told. John said if all He did was written, the world could not contain a book

large enough. His birth in Bethlehem is told in a sweeping manner: born in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger because no room was in the inn. A heavenly host sang an introduction, shepherds came to see Him, and wise men. Yet while in His baby crib He was called a King. It's a story children never get tired of and old folk never grow weary of. This story tells me God broke through in human history and walked the earth. Jesus, the man, grew up in a sheltered mountain village among the commonplace, unwanted, unheard of, and forgotten. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" they inquired. I tell you yes from the highest mountain. Jesus had four brothers and some sisters and knew all normal chores about the home place. He knew about carpentry and could attend sheep. While He did these minor works, a spiritual flame burned in His righteous soul. Jesus was harnessed in by these immediate duties, but was ever aware of His divine mission here on our little planet. When He finished up His homework in Nazareth, He walked out to fill His real task. Then came His baptism at John's hands. He readily accepted His call and God's approval by the descending Spirit and the voice saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." The temptation experience tells of His strength told in a heart-warming manner.

He walked out of the sinister wilderness of temptations, preaching God's blessed gospel of the Kingdom. Every movement known to history has had a slogan. With Booker T. Washington, "Let's educate our hands as well as our minds." With John F. Kennedy it was, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country." With Martin Luther King it was, "Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty I'm free at last." With President Nixon, "Let us speak quietly to one another so that our words may

be heard as well as our voices." The renowned Lincoln stated, "With liberty and justice for all." But with Christ it was, "The Kingdom of God." And it is the Kingdom of God. It is "The rule of God in the hearts of men and in society." At this point we are not mainly concerned about what He said or did but who He was. Naturally, knowing Him you will want to listen to Him.

But how may we explain the tremendous effect of His life upon the world and on society? Why is it that His haunting effect continues to be felt with ever-growing intensity for, lo, these twenty long centuries? Yes, with the tenacity of a colossal bulldog, He hangs on.

First, it was the uniqueness of Jesus, the man, like a giant magnetic force that drew men to Him. He never led an Army, or went off to college. No newspaper or magazine ever advertised Him. No wealthy friends nor political leaders supported Him. He constructed nothing, nor destroyed anything. Externally, the world was about the same at His death as at His birth. There was uniqueness in His character. He was never jealous, envious, uncertain or rude. He was never in a big hurry, never complained; nor was He proud, haughty or tried to forward Himself on people. Yet He was a great mixer. All through history, philosophers and thinkers have searched for truth in space, earth, and sea; but Jesus never searched for truth, He possessed truth. He is the truth. None has ever been more God conscious. He never argued God, He simply took God for granted. God to Jesus, you see, was not a definition, a syllogism, or an essay, but a living presence. Whatever His crises were, He made His approach from God. His prayer life seems to have been the highlight of His disposition. There were several things Jesus never learned how to do: hate, lie, doubt or worry. His sinlessness led men to

Him. He never sorrowed over His own sins but over the sins of others. They seemed to have known it. Peter said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The wife of Pilate said, "O Lord, have nothing to do with this just man." Judas' lamentable cry was, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." The thief on the cross said, "We indeed justly, but this man has done nothing amiss." His great claims caused men to stand in stupid awe. He claimed perfection. He claimed to have come from God. He claimed to have healed the sick, raised the dead, unstopped deaf ears, loosed the tongues of the dumb, made lame walk, and the maimed whole. He spoke in certain phrases. We say perhaps, maybe, usually, but He said verily, verily. Jesus brought into being a plan that a thousand knights would never imagine. He devised a plan to make from an already existing creation, a new creation. Paul said, "If any man be in Christ, He is a new creation" (II Cor. 5:17). This plan covers all lands, islands, peoples and tongues.

His amazing compassion is unequalled in all history. Yes, His deep and abiding concern for people was and is another high point in His character. Well, all points about Him were high. There was no weak side to His character. He always had time for people. We need to imitate Him in this. Jesus really became a part of all the happenings of His day. Young, middle and old could approach Him. He didn't frighten the world with knuckled fists, but welcomed it with opened arms. He didn't build fences, but opened gates. He never allowed a generation gap to separate Him from young or old. He never got hung up on skin, hair, eyes or colors. As a great orator stated, Jesus simply dragged the sorrow of this old benighted world across His loving soul. In the morning He saves a troubled ship, at noon He converses with a poor woman of five broken romances, in the evening He feeds an unemployed

multitude, and at night He entertains a Hebrew scholar. Across the threshold of His Capernaum home fell the shadows of the limp, the lamed, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, seeking Him, for they knew Jesus cared. Yes, Jesus cared for people no one cared for, He loved people no one loved, He befriended people no one befriended: the blind, lepers, lunatics, and maimed. In that upper room He seemed to have said, eat my flesh, drain and drink my blood, but I will still have you.

There were from the beginning various reactions to Him. Gabriel announced His conception. Heavenly hosts announced His birth. Shepherds and wise men came to worship Him. Simeon blessed Him and was ready to die. Little children ran to the music of His voice and sat on His knee. The aged found comfort in His presence. The sick found healing in His spirit and in the hem of His clothes. He had His hour of great popularity when crowds thronged Him with Hosanna praise. But soon a "Mafia" driven by Hellish hate and envy put a death curse on Him. They, with dirty politics and unscrupulous skullduggery, convinced the people He was a maniac on the loose. Betrayed by those He trained, abandoned by those He loved, scarred by those He pitied, and a red mantle across His shoulders, with a crown of piercing thorns on His head, Jesus carried His cross to a scoundrel's grave. He who was born in a distant city, in a borrowed stable, and was laid in a borrowed manger, rode on a borrowed mule, must now be laid to rest in a borrowed grave. Heavy stones were laid against the entrance of the grave; an imposing seal of Rome. Who would dare tamper with possessions of the Roman power? The guards were doubled to make sure no one would take His body away. The women were so sure He was dead permanently, that they brought clothes and spices for His permanent resting ceremony. Had

they believed He would arise, they would have brought street clothes and food for Him.

Calvary was to Jesus' followers an insurmountable obstacle. Golgotha wounded their very souls; to them it was the very end. But the greatest miracle of all ages began to happen early the third morning. The angels cared nothing about a Roman seal and the stones rolled there nor the guards. They broke the seal, rolled the stones away, and frightened the guards into a fainting hysteria. It didn't take a legion of angels to do it. Just two. But from the sepulchered gloom of the Arimethean garden, came a voice, a happy voice, a joyous voice, saying, "He isn't here, He is risen as He said." Another thing that was so heart-warming to His followers was that His compassion had not diminished. His love was still for them. Mary knew Him by His voice. No, no grave was deep enough, no stone heavy enough, no seal secure enough, no guards strong enough, no court powerful enough to hold Jesus in His grave. On Friday the world said goodbye to Him and on Sunday morning He said hello to the World. Not Herod, Pilate or the Sanhedrin court had the last word, but Christ. Ever since then we have complete assurance that whatever Jesus has a stake in is sound. The disciples, who at first were overtaken by many fears, left that upper room with the resurrection message. They went out into a world that hated and despised them and their leader, but were unperturbed by cross-bearing. To hear them talk one would think they slept on beds of chinchilla fur, ate choice rib eye steaks three times a day and rode in a Rolls Royce. They sang their songs in back alleys, catacombs and caves of Jerusalem, Judea, and uttermost parts of the earth. They knew Jesus was to be our great and main concern. Remember Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi? Why with sore, bloody backs, with feet in the stakes and hands bound, they had a prayer meeting service late one

night. They sang as never Marian Anderson, Nat King Cole, Bing Crosby, Andy Williams, or the Temptations ever did. As long as Jesus the man is alive, sing! Let the enemies plan and plot, but sing and pray to the God of your being. They sang until God sent an earthquake and all were set free. They needed no mechanical instruments, no, not at all. We need to sing, pray, preach, live until this old world is shaken out of its apathy and turned upside down and somebody will come trembling, saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So Jesus, the man of history, becomes the Christ of experience. His life begins and ends with a miracle. In His birth is our joy, in His life is our example, in His cross is our redemption and in His resurrection is our hope.

Yes, Jesus the man is with us and is our mediator. If He is not with us, then our road is one of blight, slight, and eternal night. A road where the summer sun never shines, but is forever winter time. A road where horror of horrors assail us. A road where no roses bloom. A road where no bed is prepared to rest away our weary souls. But Christ is with us and we are glad. He is more than a hypothetical Christ of sentimental conjuring. He is more than an eminent Christ of culture. He is more than an artistic Christ of painters dreaming the conception. He is more than an ivory Christ on a crucifix. Jesus the man, is the Son of the living God.

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN

Eugene Lawton

Eugene Lawton is a native of St. Petersburg, Florida. While a teenager, he was baptized into the church of Christ by the late S. J. Dudley, September, 1951. He began preaching the glorious gospel on January 23, 1955 in Terrell, Texas while a student at Southwestern Christian College.

His academic credentials include Southwestern Christian College, Terrell, Texas—Associate of Arts degree; Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, California—Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees; advanced work at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey; and an Honorary Doctorate degree from Christian Bible Institute, New York, New York.

Eugene Lawton has been preaching the gospel for seventeen years



and his experiences are numerous. He served with distinction as minister of the East 7th Street church of Christ, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1959-1961 and the Newark church of Christ, Newark, New Jersey, 1963-69 and 1971-; where he serves presently as minister. He worked as the field representative of Southwestern Christian College, 1961-1963. He was the academic dean of Southwestern Christian College, Terrell, Texas, 1969-1971. In 1971 he was selected as one of the Outstanding Young Men of America. In 1968, he was Co-Director of the National Interracial Conference among min-

isters of the churches of Christ.

As a writer, Eugene Lawton has written articles in several national publications. He edited the 1968 National Church Lectureship book. He is the Director of "The Now Christ Series" of Bible School Literature.

Mr. Lawton is perpetually busy speaking on National Lectureships, College Lectureships, National Youth Conferences, and conducting Gospel Meetings, Teachers' Training Workshops and Inner City Workshops from the Gulf to the Great Lakes, and from the sunny shores of California to the skyscrapers of New York City.

He is married to Diane Trone and has three children; Fitzgerald, Cedric and Kathleen. His business address is Newark Church of Christ, 894 So. 14th Street, Newark, New Jersey 07108.

Space exploration makes us very familiar with the term, re-entry. As the astronauts rode in Apollo XI from their Cape Kennedy launching, Mrs. Neil Armstrong was asked how she felt. She cried out that she wished it were splash down rather than blastoff. It was not until re-entry took place that she could really relax. But as her husband, Neil Armstrong, went away, so he returned.

There have been some startling, thrilling, and glorious events in the history of man. The fingers of history write that it was a great day when God formulated man out of the dust of the ground. It was an auspicious day when the sun stood still a whole day at the command of Joshua. It was an unparalleled day when Jesus was born in Bethlehem and the angels broke the silence of heaven by singing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will toward men"

(Luke 2:14). It was a great day when Abraham Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation, unlocking the handcuffs of slavery of our forefathers as unprecedented joy and unaccustomed delight burst from their souls, "Free at last, free at last, thank God, Almighty; we are free at last." It was an unforgettable day when man placed his feet upon the surface of the moon for the first time; dreams, aspirations of centuries were finally fulfilled. It was truly, one small step for man; one giant step for mankind (Neil Armstrong). Our minds have to affirm without hesitation that these were some of the most auspicious and monumental events in the exciting history of man.

May I magnetize your thinking to the most startling, most thrilling, most glorious event of all the centuries, and that event is JESUS IS COMING AGAIN. When this same Jesus, who stepped on a cloud and was taken up into heaven, (Acts 1:11), when the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of God (I Thess. 4:16), when my Jesus shall come with the clouds and every eye shall see him (Rev. 1:7); this will be the most astounding day the world has ever known. This same Jesus who spoke to the raging storm, and said to the turbulent winds and waves, "Peace, be still," who arched a rainbow of hope over the cloud of human bereavement, who carried the cross up the hill of Calvary, who saved my soul and one day made me whole, is coming again.

I believe that the turbulence of our times is reaching the breaking point, and only the re-entry of Jesus Christ can alleviate the escalating anxieties of this troubled world. As I view the cataclysmic events of this wretched world, as I observe the constant declination in moral standards, as I see wars, poverty, pollution, racism and crimes; the question

comes to my mind quite frequently, will Christ come again soon? I ask the question, How Long, and the reverberating answer overwhelms my soul, Not Long. How long will God permit dope addicts and dope pushers to corrupt the community, destroy and devitalize the minds and bodies of men and women. The answer is not long. How long will God permit the ugly hand of war to prance in countries around the world, leaving death, destruction and broken hearts. How long will God permit muggers to knock innocent people in the head and organized gangsters to carry top politicians in their hip pockets? Not Long! How long will God permit the maelstrom of lawlessness, the hurricane of violence, the tornado of selfishness, the cyclone of sexual permissiveness, the typhoon of revolt to rage? The answer is not long. When my Lord makes His glorious and dramatic re-entry, that will be the day when God will remove his faithful children from terrestrial terrors to celestial triumph; and tragic, awesome destruction will be unleashed upon the wicked.

MAN'S CONDITIONS AROUND THE WORLD CRY OUT THAT THE GREAT RE-ENTRY WILL BE SOON

I must admit that I am not a date-setter, because of that hour knoweth no man, only God the Father (Matt. 25:36). There will be no countdown to inform us of His second coming. However, God's blessed book gives certain signs that would precede His glorious re-entry, and when I look at the signs and the conditions of the world, I say come, Lord Jesus. It is ironic and paradoxical that man has launched missiles into space by sophisticated science, while he is being ripped apart beneath by woes of war, the suffocation of pollution, distressing poverty, raging racism, and weapons which beckon impending annihilation. Schizophrenically split men yearn to get glued together again. Multitudes have rejected the

Bible and are turning to astrology. It is the "In" thing for the jet set. Psychic Phenomena, communication from beyond, crystal gazing, horoscope checking, Yoga masters, voodoo priests are indicative of man's wicked condition. From the beginning of time people have been obsessed with a desire to peel off the cover of tomorrow with the help of prophets, magicians, the stars and the moon, astrology. Someone says to you that I am Gemini or Leo; who are you, and you are supposed to answer that you are Aquarius or Scorpio. Witchcraft is not approved by God. A long time ago God said, "Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:31). The New Testament projects the same idea; "And many that believed came, and confessed and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men..." (Acts 19:18,19).

Our world is sick. Sick because it has let loose a maelstrom of lawlessness, a hurricane of violence, a tornado of selfishness, a cyclone of sexual permissiveness, and a typhoon of revolt. Our world is sick. Former president Lyndon Baines Johnson stated that our nation is a nation of captives, locks, and barred windows. No wonder someone has said that the only safe place in this world is in the grave; and even that is not completely safe. Our world is sick because of mob violence and vicious loners like Lee Harvey Oswald, Richard Speck, Earl Ray, and Charles Manson. Our world is sick because each year in the United States one hundred millionaires commit suicide because money is not a passport to happiness. Our world is sick. Listen to some of the top pop songs: "Have You Got Cheating On Your Mind?"; "Second Time Around," "Strangers In The Night," "Let's Spend The Night Together," and "If Loving You Is Wrong, I Don't

Want To Be Right.” It was Jesus who declared, “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark” (Matt. 24:37,38).

Science and technology make me believe that His re-entry is soon. The world was destroyed by water the first time, but it will be fire next time. The apostle Peter says: “On that day, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). Man has seen the far side of the moon, lost total contact with the earth temporarily, has been for the first time outside of the earth’s gravitational pull, and has walked on the moon. There are ballistic missiles in orbit right now that can be dropped in strategic places in the world with the push of a button, which would destroy vast sections of our world. Whether God will choose to let the end come through the instrumentality of men, or choose to bring it about in some other way, we cannot know. My brothers and sisters you might know a lot of things, but this is one thing that you need to know—the re-entry of Jesus Christ. It is terrible to be ignorant of some great things. It is terrible to know botany and be ignorant of Jesus, the Lily of the Valley. It is terrible to know all about astronomy and be ignorant of Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star. It is terrible to know the ages of rocks and to be ignorant of the Rock of Ages. Equally tragic, is to be ignorant of the second coming of Jesus Christ. Listen to Paul: “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have not hope. For the Lord himself shall

descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (I Thess. 4:13-16). He is coming again, oh yes he is. He is not coming as he was when he walked upon the cobblestone streets of Palestine, not as he was when he was betrayed and deserted by prominent people of his day, not carrying the cross of shame upon Calvary. He is coming as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. The hymnologist speaks for me when he wrote:

When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound,
 And time shall be no more,
 And the morning breaks eternal, bright and fair,
 When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore,
 And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN, READY OR NOT

When Jesus comes the second time, the octogenarian, John, said that every eye shall see him (Rev. 1:7). Some religious groups advocate that the Lord returned in 1914. When someone who was living in 1914 indicated that he did not see Jesus, they responded that John meant every eye of faith would see him. If your faith was right, you saw him. The Bible still says, “every eye shall see Him,” and even those who pierced him will see him.

He is coming in power and glory (Mark 13:26). He is not coming to give people a second chance, (Heb. 9:27), but to judge and separate nations (Matt. 25:31), and reward every man according to his works (2 Cor. 5:10). He is not coming to set up a kingdom, because we, Christians, are already in His kingdom (Col. 1:13, Rev. 1:9). Some teach that Christ is coming again to set up an earthly kingdom and universal peace will one day come to the earth, advocating that the

forces of righteousness will battle the forces of evil and when the forces of righteousness are victorious, the earthly kingdom will be inaugurated. This concept cannot be substantiated in God's blessed book. Hear Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews" (John 18:36). The kingdom of the Lord is spiritual. Paul emphasizes the spiritual nature of the kingdom in these graphic words: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Being delivered from the power of darkness was the release from the guilt and domination of sin. This is the entrance to Christ's spiritual kingdom and it is by a spiritual birth (John 3:5). When He comes, every tongue shall confess His name and every knee shall bow (Phil. 2:9). Can God be trusted? Are His promises reliable? I ask you, where is Babylon with her hanging gardens? Where are Sodom and Gomorrah with their audacious immorality? Where is the greatness of ancient Athens? Today they are no more than heaps of dust. Why is it that Rome had the scepter snatched from her palsied hands? There is but one answer. The Bible tells us: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17).

Hear Peter, "Since all these things will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people should you be? Your lives should be holy and dedicated to God, as you wait for the Day of God" (2 Pet. 3:11,12 TEV). Christ's great re-entry will be a tragic time for the man who has disregarded moral law and lived as though Christ had not died. It will be a tragic day for those who fight the church and ignore the church. It will be a weeping time and a time of despair for the unsaved church members. It will be a time of distress for those who procrastinate. Good intentions will not be acceptable on that

day. One of the greatest sins that can be committed against Christ is to postpone him. No wonder Paul said, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11).

The second coming of Christ should inspire men toward purity. "Everyone that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (I John 3:3, ASV). This hope should also incite Christians to set less value on the things of this present life and more upon the kingdom of God. The Christian cannot afford to let his concern for investment in the present world overshadow his interest in the invisible, everlasting kingdom of Christ. The Christian's hope rests, ultimately, not on military defenses, but on the second coming of Jesus Christ. Every time the Christian takes the Lord's Supper, he should focus his mind on the return of Jesus Christ, "This do in remembrance . . . till he come" (I Cor. 11:25,26). Thus the most glorious trip that the Christian will ever take will be when Jesus comes again. Christ is coming. What an incentive to evangelize! We must go and talk about Jesus.

It is said that Queen Victoria was deeply touched by a sermon of F. W. Farrar on the Lord's second coming. After the sermon she told him, "I should like to be living when Jesus comes, so that I could lay the crown of England at His feet." If you don't have the crown of England to lay at His feet; you can lay down the crown of your life to him. On His day of re-entry the Bible says, "Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, the other left (Luke 17:35,36). The Master warns us: "Watch ye therefore for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:35-37). May we be

ready, for there will be no countdown to inform us of His coming. One of these days every faithful child of God will take a trip beyond outer space. Listen to Paul, "For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall arise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (I Thess. 4:16,17). Talk about a thrill, talk about excitement. Think about the millions of the dead who have died in the Lord—some were eaten by wild beasts, some were burned at the stake, some were drowned in the midst of the sea, some beheaded. But in a twinkling of an eye, the faithful children of God will burst out of their graves with their redeemed and glorified bodies; stand for a moment until those who are alive can join them and together with thousands of living faithful children of God, this great company will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. Then all of God's children will accompany Jesus to Heaven. You talk about space travel; this is one trip that I don't want to miss. Yes, God's space ship, the Church, will be piloted by Jesus, the world's greatest astronaut; soaring upward sweeping past the moon and the sun, sweeping past systems of the world's constellations and galaxies without a single incident of fatality, no liquid oxygen, no being crowded in a small space ship, landing safely in the Heaven of Heavens. In that land of sweet deliverance, we will be lifted out of sadness into joy, out of pain into peace, where we will suffer no more, cry no more, die no more and we can truly sing a song that angels cannot sing, "Home at last, home at last, thank God Almighty, home at last."

CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST

William S. Banowsky

William S. Banowsky, president of Pepperdine University, previously held posts as dean of students and chancellor of the university's new Malibu college. He first served on the faculty at Pepperdine in 1959.

Dr. Banowsky received his B. A. Degree from David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee. He earned his Master's Degree at the University of New Mexico, and his Ph.D. in Communications from the University of Southern California.

A veteran of over 19 years preaching experience, he has served churches in Kentucky, New Mexico, California, and Texas. During his ministry with the Broadway Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas, the congregation reached a membership of approximately 2,400.



At the age of 36, Dr. Banowsky is well known as a lecturer and author as well as an educational administrator. His books include *Mirror of a Movement*, *The Now Generation*, *It's A Playboy World*, and a volume of sermons in the series, *Great Preachers of Today*.

Foreign speaking tours have taken him to the Orient in 1960, to Western Europe in 1964, to the Middle East in 1966, to South America in 1968, and to Russia in 1969. In 1970 he spoke for the Far East Fellowship in Tachikawa, Japan.

Dr. Banowsky has been appointed by the White House to the Technical Committee on Spiritual Well Being of the Conference on Aging and is a member of the Los Angeles County Judicial Reviews Commission. He was named one of the United States Junior Chamber of Commerce's *Outstanding Young Men of America*.

He and his wife Gay reside with their four sons in the President's Home on Pepperdine's Los Angeles Campus.

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?” (John 14:9)

Christianity is the only religion in the world which rests on the person of its founder. One can be a Buddhist by faithfully following the prescribed principles of that religion without concerning himself in the least with the person of Buddha. In the same way, a Mohammedan must adhere to the precepts of Mohammed but is not required to have a relationship with Mohammed in any direct or personal sense. But Christianity is strikingly different. The very essence of the Christian religion is commitment to the person of Christ.

Christianity is grounded in the facts of history. Some religions, both ancient and modern, require no historical basis, because they are rooted in ideas rather than actual events. But the roots of Christianity reach back to the Old Testament where religion and history are inseparably joined. And “in the fulness of time,” the central event of human history occurred in the coming of Christ.

By drawing this contrast with other world religions, it becomes clear that it is not Christianity, *per se*, which is

different, but rather Christ himself. Christ is unique. The uniqueness of Christianity derives entirely from the uniqueness of Christ. The power and appeal of Christianity are rooted in the person of Christ. The other great world religions have developed far beyond the personal stature of their founders. That is, Mohammedanism the religion is greater than Mohammed the man. Buddhism is bigger than Buddha. But Christianity is not greater than Christ. Its greatness derives directly from the person of Christ. Christianity is Christ.

Since Christianity derives its distinctive appeal from the person of Christ, the central question then becomes: Why is Christ unique? What is there in Christ which gives to his religion an extraordinary power over the lives of men? The answer lies in the special claims he made regarding God. Other founders of other religions claimed to be men of God. Buddha was a pious teacher, Mohammed possessed a fanatical dedication. Both claimed to be servants of God. But Christ claimed to be the very revelation of God himself. The degree to which men believe him in that claim is the degree to which he will have influence over their lives.

This is true because what we hope for in the experience of religion is relationship with God. Frequently, the church has placed too much emphasis elsewhere. If it is fellowship and fraternizing which we offer, then we can scarcely blame men for preferring the Kiwanis Club or the bowling alley. If it is merely moral guidance which we give them, some will seek it in the Boy Scouts or the American Civil Liberties Union. What men need and want is to be at one with God.

The spiritual upheaval of recent years has served to remind us again that it is God Himself for which men hunger. This is because we are spiritual creatures, made for more than

bread alone. The richness and depth, the drive and intensity of human life is too profound to be explained in purely materialistic terms. Young people, especially, have been shouting this to our civilization in recent years. The abundance of material goods and the great educational opportunities afforded by our affluent culture, have not brought fulfillment. Rebelling against the materialistic life style, many have sought avenues of simple human service. And in reaction to the rationalistic theories, many have plunged into various forms of mysticism. The search has not always led to God, but God Himself is the source of the hunger.

The difficulty is that God is not easily found. Nowhere are we more simplistic than in our casual and off-hand remarks about God. Some of us, in some of our prayers and conversations, leave the impression that we are on very familiar terms with God, just like he's one of the folks, albeit the head folk. Not only are many thoughtful people repelled by that kind of sentimentality, but such familiarity with God is also un-biblical. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" asks Job. "The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea" (Job 11:7,9). "For your thoughts are not my thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" (Romans 11:33-34). I point to these passages, from both Old and New Testaments, to emphasize the distance which the Bible places between God and men. God is God! In contrast with the profound incomprehensibility by which the scriptures describe God, the back-slapping famili-

arity of some is, at best, in very poor taste. At worst, it is religion gone to seed. What passes for piety is really irreverence!

But the fact that God is not easily known in no way reduces the deep human desire to find Him. What our spirits crave is a personal friendship, the security of a deep and close relationship. We believe that God is a person, and we long to know him. This is because personal relationships lie at the very heart of all human existence. In the universe, as we know it, there are but two realities, persons and things. The most clear-cut of all divisions is the line that separates the two. Any one person above that line is worth more than all of the things combined below it. Persons are infinitely precious. Things are of instrumental value and may be used as we need them, but persons are of ultimate worth and are to be loved as ends in themselves.

“Ideas,” observed George Eliot, “are poor ghosts until they become incarnate in a person.” The exciting idea that God is with us took on real meaning when one named Emmanuel came to our earth.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1-4,14)

In recent years, as the diety of Christ has been questioned by modern scholarship, we have properly risen to defend the faith. In our conviction that Jesus is the Son of God, we have focused primary attention upon the divinity of

Christ. And that emphasis has not only been appropriate, but under the circumstances, absolutely essential.

But in this approach, we have frequently failed to fully appreciate and stress the humanity of Christ. The scriptures present Jesus of Nazareth as a historical person, a complete human being, with all of the frailties and temptations, joys and sorrows, hungers and hurts of human life as we know it. Apart from this view, the suffering and death of Christ lose much of their significance.

“For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”
(Hebrews 4:15)

Because it lies at the heart of Christianity, the humanity of Christ cannot be watered down nor compromised. It is a gross distortion to imagine that Christ was, somehow, part man and part God—a homogenized personality. Such a hybrid being would not qualify as a complete human being, nor could he claim to be fully God. What we have in Christ is the profound mystery of incarnation—one who was in every respect fully human, but who also claimed to be fully God. This is a truly exciting idea!

In fact, there are two great truths bound up in the person of Christ. The most obvious is the idea of substitutionary atonement, that one has died for my sins, and through him, I have peace with God (Romans 5:1). But a second great truth actually underlies the doctrine of atonement. That is the idea of *revelation*, that Jesus exposes to us the very person and nature of God. Unless this idea is true, the doctrine of atonement is robbed of its meaning.

Consequently, the most basic thing that can be said about Christ is that he shows us God, the Father. In a truly remarkable passage, Christ declared:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?” (John 14:6-9)

Because of our need to be militant in defending the diety of Christ, we have grown accustomed to saying that Christ is like God. But then we are forced to define Christ in terms of God and, as a result, we are arguing from a position that is ultimately incomprehensible. “To begin with God,” Elton Trueblood helpfully suggests, “is indeed to follow the logical order, but what is required now is the epsilonological order. We must begin with what we know.”

Constructing a formal theology, it is natural and logical to commence with God, the maker of heaven and earth. But if we are in search of companionship and communion, belief in God is not a good place to start because of the intrinsic ambiguity involved. What we need is a point of reference which is concrete, meaningful, and historically grounded. While it is biblically accurate to say that Christ is like God, it is far more meaningful to say that God is like Christ. Christ is a person whom we can know, a flesh and blood human being. This approach, which features the Christlikeness of God, appeals intellectually to contemporary men because it proceeds logically from the relatively known to the relatively unknown. Who is God? Or, should we ask, what is He? Where

is he? Is he a mere idealized reality? Or abstract energy? Or the Ground of all Being? Or is he really a person? If so, what kind of person? Vindictive, removed, cold and uncaring? Or is God really like Jesus Christ? *Christianity is Christ because Jesus reveals to us what kind of a person God would be if God were a human being.*

Christianity, then, is a religion which makes the bold claim of revealing God to men, and which renders the Creator of Heaven and earth personally available to assist with our smallest human needs. And the joy is that all of this is possible only in Christ. "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" asks Isaiah in frustration. But Paul, quoting this statement from the prophet, is able to affirm joyously to the Corinthians, "But we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:16). No finite person can really know God, because God is both invisible and largely inscrutable. But in Christ we have something concrete, a person whom we can understand, "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). Apart from Jesus, the deep hunger to know God can lead into bizarre paths ranging from astrology to guruism. Many in our time are off into drugs, holy spirit kicks, and other forms of mysticism, because, apart from Jesus, God *cannot* be known.

"No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matthew 11:27)

In the man, Jesus Christ, we find God invading human flesh. When Isaiah prophesied about the birth of Christ he announced a series of names that he would be called, including "Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6). When the angel heralded to Joseph the news about the nature of the unborn

child in Mary's womb, he said he would be called "Emmanuel" which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Paul later writes concerning Jesus, "In him dwells all of the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). The author of Hebrews states that Christ is the "... radiance of the glory of God, flawless expression of the nature of God" (Heb. 1:3 Phillips).

Let's notice the emerging picture as Christ reveals to us the character of God. We see quickly the expected things—the holiness, the wisdom, the greatness as a teacher, the miraculous power, the personal strength. But there are other very significant qualities that are perhaps not so easily recognized, but which are deeply instructive to us.

Jesus was totally convinced of the superiority of the spiritual over the physical. He always, in every contact, found a way to make the transition to the spiritual. At the well in Samaria, he went from the water of Jacob's well to the water of life, which only He could give.

Or again, he refused all pressures to devote his power to purely physical purposes and ends. While he could multiply a few loaves of bread and a few fish so that thousands could be fed, he fled from being made that kind of king (John 6:15). He rebuked those who followed only for the physical food (John 6:26-27) and refused to do miracles to entertain (Matthew 12:38-39). Those today who are involved with a social gospel emphasis would do well to note this refusal on the part of Christ.

In wondering what God is really like, we must notice that Christ identified more with weakness than with power,

and frequently with the out-group rather than with the in-group. He seemed to the spiritual leaders of that day to get the "good guys" and the "bad guys" mixed up! He openly associated with publicans and sinners (Matthew 11:19). At a social gathering his words were bitingly critical to an accepted spiritual leader and warmly kind to a repentant woman of the street (Luke 7:26-50). His most stern expressions were to the establishment of that day, whom he called "hypocrites," "blind guides," "fools," "whited sepulchres," and "offspring of vipers" (Matthew 23). And who could forget the unhappy comparison of the priest and the Levite to the good Samaritan (Luke 10), or the Pharisee and the publican who went into the temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). And yet, he never left the idea that he condoned the evil in a person's life. This was consistent with his avowed intention of seeking and saving the lost (Luke 19:10). Those who were blinded by self-righteousness could not profit by contact with Christ, therefore, he went openly to the obvious sinners and the downtrodden, who acknowledged their need and could accept the help that Jesus offered.

A person never reveals his values and character more fully than in those instances when we may observe *what* makes him angry, or causes him to be upset. While we are prone to become upset about selfish things, things that somehow cause us personal discomfort, Christ became angry about circumstances that were truly important. He was deeply disturbed by the injustices and inequities that men perpetrated against each other (Matthew 18:23-35). He reacted with anger at those who blatantly misrepresented God. When he encountered those who held that God was more concerned about the sabbath than persons, Mark writes, "... he looked around with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart" (3:5). He drove animals and money-changers from

the temple to prove that God's house is not for and under the control of thieves, but is in fact a place for prayer (Matthew 21:12-13).

And who is not stirred by Christ's ability to go to the good in every man and challenge a fuller development of that good. Many in our world look for the flaw, and stress the negative in themselves and in others. It is probably true that the classical vision of God has been that of an angry old man just waiting to jump on the first fault that he sees, anxiously seeking some reason to cast miserable creatures into hell. But God has not so revealed himself in Christ. To the woman taken in the very act of adultery, he said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again" (John 8:10-11). He looked at impetuous Peter, a rough fisherman, who probably did not use very nice language (judging from his reversion to bad speech when he denied Christ), and saw in him the potential of a great spiritual leader who could accept one day a significant part in sharing the good news of Christ. The "sons of thunder" were chosen even though they were more than slightly combatant, but Christ saw in one of them a faithful martyr, and in the other, the wonderful apostle of love.

We also see in Christ's revelation that God in the flesh enjoyed social life and was deeply responsive to the physical world about him. He was no recluse, withdrawn from men and from his own physical appetites, but he enjoyed people and food and fun. How often we find him at table with friends, even to the point that some accused him of gluttony and winebibbing (Matthew 11:19). He was equally at home at a wedding feast (John 2:1-11), or just chatting with his disciples along the way. He loved nature, and even the smallest of details did not seem to escape his eye—the care of

a shepherd for his sheep, the beauty of the lilies of the field, the tiny mustard seed which produced a plant that served as a nesting place for birds—the parables of Jesus show his sense of relationship to and responsiveness to the physical world about him. What some in the church may yet need to experience more fully is that Christianity is not an escape from life, but a releasing to life; not a curtailment of freedom, but the achievement of genuine liberty; not a masochistic denial of the world God has made for us, but the fullest possible inheritance of abundant life, both here and in the larger world beyond.

Perhaps the most astonishing trait of all is seen when God in the flesh took a towel and washed the disciples feet at the last supper. Christ had attempted to help his followers understand that happiness and even power do not come from being served but from serving (Matthew 20:20-28). They had not been able to grasp that message, since it is so contrary to human thinking. In washing their feet he no doubt was trying to open their understanding to the true significance of his life and especially his death on the cross.

While we are deeply moved by this example of real greatness, we are also frustrated by it. This is because no one of us can successfully follow it, in all details. Therefore, we are grateful that Christ does more than show us what God is like, he also makes God personally available to us. Until the death of Christ, man was not able to really know God, nor to have communion with him. As Isaiah said, sin had erected an insurmountable barrier between man and his creator (59:1-2). But Jesus changed all of that. Through him, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). God comes to make his dwelling in the faithful (John 14:23). The significance of the reconciliation is that man is now atoned, he is truly “at-one” with God (Romans 5:11).

The implications of this unity with God are truly marvelous. Just to think that the Creator of the cosmos would be interested in having communion with us is staggering, and yet John says, "our fellowship is with the Father" (I John 1:3). Three aspects of time—the past, the present, and the future—are vitally affected by this communion.

For the past, the communion with God through Christ affords a washing and a renewal which makes man acceptable to God. Paul declares, "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). As we walk in the light of Christ there is a constant cleansing through the blood that he shed (I John 1:7). Those who conceive of the salvation in Christ as a hit and miss, on and off kind of experience, who live in mortal fear that they might die just after sinning and before asking forgiveness, have not grasped the concept of this continual cleansing which God supplies.

For the present, the communion with God through Christ offers a two-part guarantee in terms of the on-going trials and troubles that we face. First, there is a guarantee that no temptation or difficulty will exceed our ability to deal successfully with the situation (I Cor. 10:13). Secondly, there is a promise that every condition of life will in some way (the how is God's business) work to enhance our life (Romans 8:28). This makes it possible for us to identify with the statement in Hebrews 13:6, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?"

For the future, the fear of death is hidden in the joy of a closer communion with God. If Christ was right, one day, in some way, we shall see God face to face, and we shall know him, even as we are known.

PANELS

GOD'S WILL AND RACE

Humphrey Foutz

Born in Mexia, Texas, in 1933; moved to Dallas, Texas in 1937, where he grew up. Mr. Foutz attended Catholic schools from his youth through his college years, including Xavier University, a Jesuit school in New Orleans, Louisiana. He has studied beyond the Bachelors Degree at Johns Hopkins University and Maryland State College (Coppin).

He has been preaching for sixteen years—first at Dallas, Texas, as an associate at Cedar Crest Church of Christ for two years, then for one year in San Antonio, Texas, and after that for thirteen years in Baltimore, Maryland, where he presently serves. He holds several gospel meetings each year and speaks on college campuses throughout the nation.



A short time ago an interesting trial was held in the state of Georgia. There was this candidate for high public office who persisted in using racial epithets in his campaigning. One would suppose that the entire region would be up in arms. No, this was not the case at all, just Jews and Blacks. Why? Because they were the groups being maligned. The outcome of the trial seemed to reflect this. The racist politician was

acquitted of any wrongdoing by the courts. Though he lost the election; yet this is a sign of the times.

This experience is not meant to suggest that all white Anglo-Saxon protestants in that state are racists—far from it. Many people in this area have fought long and hard for racial justice. Nor does it mean the courts have not contributed to the progress made in the attempt to cure the flagrant racism in the land. But I think the above experience reveals that it is a mistake to suppose that even now freedom, justice, and equality are the norm while racism is just a radical departure on the part of a few extremists. What is racism? Dr. George Kelsey states that:

... Racism is a faith. It is a form of idolatry ... In its¹ early modern beginnings, racism was a justificatory device. It did not emerge as a faith. It arose as an ideological justification for the constellations of political and economic power which were expressed in colonialism and slavery. But gradually the idea of superior race was heightened and deepened in meaning and value so that it pointed beyond the historical structures of relation, in which it emerged, to human existence itself.

Racism is a philosophy based on a disregard or contempt for life and for the individual made in the likeness of God. But it is not enough to cite the statements of Psychologists, Social Scientists and other well-meaning but uninspired men. The overwhelming question is what is God's will in the question of race.

¹ See Kelsey, George, *Racism and The Christian Understanding* (Scribners', 1965) p. 9

Words are sounds or symbols used to express ideas. However, some ideas are so great and vital that it is difficult or virtually impossible for one word to adequately express the idea therein. Such a word is "God." The one who walks in a garden in the cool of the day, or the God who exists on a mountain, as Jehovah existed on Sinai or a tribal God who loves his people and hates their enemies, a being who sits above the circle of the earth and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers before Him. In the New Testament this same God is a Father who loved the world so much he gave his son as a propitiation for man's sin. John Bishop tells the story of the time when Luther was having his Bible printed in Germany. Pieces of the printer's work were allowed to fall carelessly on the floor of the shop. One day the printer's daughter picked up a piece of paper on which she found the words "God so loved the world that He gave." What followed had not yet been printed. Up to this time she had been taught that God was to be feared only. The thought that God so loved the world that He gave was a new idea of God to her, and it made life seem joyous. Her mother asked her the cause of her happiness. Putting her hand into her pocket she handed out the crumpled piece of paper. Her mother read it and said, "God so loved the world that He gave. What was it he gave?" The child was perplexed for a moment and then said, "I do not know what it was that He gave, but if He loved us well enough to give us anything we need not be afraid of Him." God the greatest lover offering for man the greatest gift. What a strange mixture of meanings for one word "God" to carry.

That this God created the world and all things therein the scriptures clearly affirm. Paul at Athens said, "God who made the world and all that is in it, being Lord of both Heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by human

hands, nor is he ministered to by human hands, as though he had need of anything—seeing that he is the one who gives to all men life and breath and everything else. From one forefather he has created every race of men to live over the face of the whole earth” (Acts 17:24-26). Two things are especially pertinent here. First, that God is the great creator. Secondly, that all races of men spring from a common stock. Let these two truths take hold in the hearts of men and you will witness a significant change in their lives. The fact that God is creator heralds the good news that this is our Father’s world. It is His by right of creation and we are simply stewards dwelling here for a brief period of time. When we settle the matter in our own hearts that this is God’s world it takes the universe off of our hands. You don’t have to be anxious about that. This is God’s world! Someone tells the story of a passenger ship, pitifully small and helpless in the midst of the storm-tossed Atlantic. The passengers huddled together in great fear that the battered ship would go down. One passenger, more courageous than the others, climbed the stairs and lifted the hatch to peer out into the night. The wind tore at the raised hatch, and he was drenched with the rain and flying spray. By the light of almost continuous flashes of lightning he saw the pilot, lashed to the steering wheel, his strong hands holding the wheel steady. The passenger closed the hatch and returned to the others. He assured them that everything was going to be all right. The pilot was at the wheel; the ship was under control, and her nose was headed into the wind. This is God’s world. He is the pilot at the wheel.

The second truth is that all races of men spring from a common stock. The fact to which Paul referred is that God created a man, Adam, and a woman, Eve. It was through this union that the entire human race was produced.

Despite the fact that God singled out the Hebrew people as a special people, God loved all men. The means that God used for the singling out of the Hebrew people was the law. Paul called this law a "middle wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14). This law separated the seed of Abraham from the other peoples of the earth and was to last until Christ (Romans 10:4).

Today after Christ is come we must not misunderstand the fact that there are no chosen people of God except the church (I Peter 2:9). It is the church that is Abraham's seed today. Paul puts it this way, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:27-29). Again the apostle Peter at the Jerusalem conference said this, "Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God who knoweth the heart, bare them witness giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith."

It is interesting to let our minds play upon the question of circumcision in the early church. This was essentially a question of race. The position briefly stated was that a Gentile would have to become a Jew, at least by the outward tokens of circumcision, dietary laws, etc., in order to become an authentic Christian.

This is strikingly paralleled today by the popular view that blacks and other minority groups must adopt the culture

of the majority (whites) group before they are really authentic Christians. This idea was refuted in the first century church and must be refuted today. James at the Jerusalem conference says, "Simon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14). No matter what the pigmentation of the skin today God has one people. Ephesians 2:13-16 says, "But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one and brake down the middle wall of partition. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace"

This was the mystery to which Paul alludes in Ephesians chapter 3, verses 3,4. "How that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ." The mystery here is explained in Ephesians chapter 3, verses 6,7, to wit, "That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

The irony of our day is to see Gentile whites and Gentile blacks dividing the church over the artificial barrier of race. Another peculiar thing about it all is that every valid argument against denominational divisions applies with equal force to racial divisions. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. 4: 4-6). Divisions based on race are just as sinful as divisions based on "creed-alizing." If we will know this truth, it could make us free.

Practical Suggestions

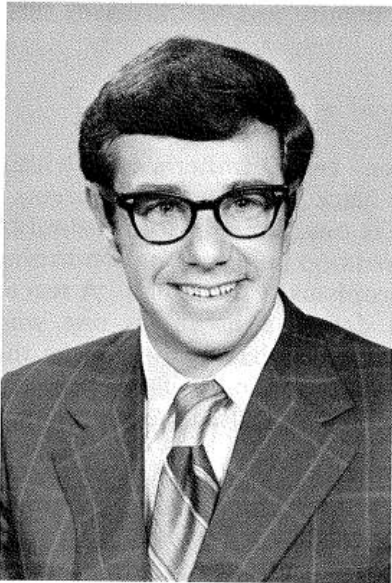
Jerry Porter

Educational Background

A graduate of David Lipscomb High School, Nashville, Tennessee. College studies at Freed Hardeman College, Bethel College, University of Tennessee, David Lipscomb College. Graduated from David Lipscomb with a B.A. in English. Received the M.A. in New Testament from Harding Graduate School. Studied under William Barclay and G.H.C. McGregor for three years at the University of Glasgow.

Preaching Experience

Local work in Bogalusa, Louisiana (3 years); Glasgow, Scotland (6 years); presently with the Meadowbrook Church of Christ, Jackson, Mississippi (7 years).



In addition to preaching in the United States he has held meetings in England, and Helsinki and Tampene, Finland.

Introduction

Many people are becoming exasperated with continuing talk of racial unrest. There is a feeling of withdrawal rather than engagement, of isolation instead of involvement, of

already having achieved the goal instead of reaching toward it. We hear statements like, "What on earth do they want? They have good schools, new freedoms. They are making progress. What do they still want?"

Out of the frustration and confusion, it is a valid question to ask, "What do they want?" If I am reading it right, it is not simply a matter of economic equality for all races or civil rights or ghetto living for minority groups, although all of these things are factors. The real revolution is over the question of the dignity of man and within the church, the brotherhood of man. That is why economic and educational gains, often won grudgingly, have not really solved the basic unrest.

Whatever practical suggestions must be in the direction of restoring to all men their dignity and to Christians their sense of brotherhood.

Body: What Can We Do?

I. Be Aware!

A. That there have been two brotherhoods within churches of Christ, one black, the other white, seems a fact beyond dispute. Yet one can read some astonishing statements in brotherhood publications concerning the absence of racial problems in the church. A recent publication sought to define a liberal as one who "talks more about racial issues than he does about the human race being lost in sin." A part of our problem has been that we have never associated racial prejudice with sin!

B. Do some reading in areas of racial concern. The problems are so deep and varied that some reading is necessary to develop understanding.

II. Speak Out!

- A. Congregations and leaders need to be challenged to think ahead about attitudes. It is true that proper attitudes cannot be legislated but they can be taught. Teaching is usually more effective if it is done before a potentially explosive problem is faced. Most people can handle racial prejudice intellectually before they can handle it emotionally.

- B. A wealth of sermon topics can be found in the scripture dealing with person to person relationships. Any preacher who seeks to apply the Bible to modern day situations is derelict in his duty if he does not point out the inconsistencies in our racial attitudes.

III. Take action!

- A. Provide contact between races. Ignorance of others is the greatest barrier to understanding and loving them. Workshops, meetings, retreats, lectureships can all be used to open up communication between races. Personal contacts can be made. It is amazing how many people do not know a person of another race in other than a superficial way.

- B. As an individual Christian affirm justice in political, civic, economic, educational and social affairs. Do not withdraw from situations where harmony can occur. Your cooperation and participation may tip the balance in the right way in community affairs.

- C. Avoid "paternalistic" situations. Often congregations in mission programs look for men to support who reflect the prejudices of their own thinking. For example, some white congregations will not hire a black

preacher who speaks out openly on racial matters to his congregation. Paternalism causes a dearth of leadership in mission congregations.

Conclusion

“. . . Human brotherhood is not just a goal. It is a condition on which our way of life depends. The question for our time is not whether all men are brothers. That question has been answered by the God who placed us on earth together. The question is whether we have the strength and the will to make the brotherhood of man the guiding principle of our daily lives. Can we match our actions to our words?”

John F. Kennedy

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT BENEVOLENCE

DUANE O. MAYFIELD

PROFESSIONAL, BUSINESS

Ministry

Loma Alta Church of Christ, Oceanside, Calif., 1962-63
Bassett Avenue Church of Christ, Sand Springs (Tulsa), Okla.,
1963-64
Arlington Church of Christ, Riverside, Calif., 1964-67
Costa Mesa Church of Christ, Costa Mesa, Calif., 1967-70
Vinton Avenue Church of Christ, Pomona, Calif., 1970-

Pre-ministry: Associate ministry, pulpit supply, student minister, 1953-62

Business: Sears, Roebuck Co.,
Los Angeles and Fresno, Calif.,
1957-62

Public Schools: Teacher, Fresno
Secondary Schools, Fresno,
Calif., 1960

Pepperdine University: Instructor in
Old Testament,
New Testament, 1972-



EDUCATION

Undergraduate

The College of the
Sequoias, Visalia,
Calif., 1953-54

San Joaquin, Delta
College, Stockton,
Calif., 1954-55

Pepperdine Univer-
sity, Los Angeles,
Calif., 1955-59 (B.A.,
1959)

Graduate

California State University at Fresno, Fresno, Calif., 1959-60

OFFICES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Pepperdine University Alumni Association, Los Angeles, Calif.

President, 1970-71

Immediate Past President, 1971-72

First Vice-President, 1969-70

Secretary-Treasurer, 1968-69

Executive Committee, 1971-72

Century Club, 1968-71

Lions International, Riverside, Calif.

Lion Tamer, 1967

Board of Directors, 1967

Chairman, National Student Speaker Contest, 1966

Scholarship Committee, 1966

Boy Scouts of America

Councilman, Orange Empire Area Council, Santa Ana, Calif.,
1969-70

Institutional Representative, Troop 399, Costa Mesa, Calif.,
1969-70

Founder, Troop 399, Costa Mesa, Calif., 1969

Pepperdine University: Los Angeles, Malibu, Calif.

Member, Chancellor's Council, 1971-

Landscape Committee for Malibu Campus, 1972-

Riverside County Chairman, "Date with Pepperdine," student
Recruitment, 1966

International Platform Association, Cleveland, Ohio, 1970-

American Alumni Council, Washington, D.C.

Ibaraki Christian Foundation, Dallas, Texas

Little League Boosters, Claremont, Calif.

RECOGNITION, HONORS

Outstanding Young Men of America, U.S. Junior Chamber of
Commerce, 1968 Ed.

Dictionary of International Biography, Dartmouth, Eng., 1969-70
Ed.
Community Leaders of America, Raleigh, N.C., 1969 Ed.

JOURNALISM

Editor, *The Christian Appeal Magazine*, 1962-64
Contributing writer: *20th Century Christian*, *Power for Today*,
Christian Chronicle, local newspapers

PUBLIC PLATFORM

Principal lectures

Ramona High School, Riverside, Calif., 1966
Pepperdine University Annual Lectures, 1967, 1970, 1971
National Black Youth Conference, Los Angeles, 1969
Church Lectureships: Calif., Ariz., Nev., 1962-

Academic speeches: Pepperdine University commencements, con-
vocation, banquets; Western Christian High, Azusa, Calif.: Bac-
calaureate Address, 1971

General civic speeches: Lions, Kiwanis, Boy Scout Court of Honor,
Masons, PTA, etc.

Invoker: City Councils, County Supervisors, Lions, BSA, PTA,
Calif. Practical Nurses Assn., sports events, misc. public events

Conferee: Educational, professional and civic forums, seminars,
conferences

CAMPUS MINISTRY

Campus Evangelism, Lubbock, Texas: Group Leader, UCLA, 1969;
Conferee, C.E. Seminar, L.A., Calif., 1967, 1968

Campus Advance

Univ. of Calif. at Santa Barbara: Forum Keynote Speaker,
1969; Speaker, "Moments of Challenge" Seminar, 1969;
Panelist, Forum, 1968

Univ. of Calif. at Irvine: Speaker, Seminar, 1970

CHURCH BROTHERHOOD POSTS

Director of Evangelism, *Inland Empire Membership Campaign*,
Riverside, Calif., 1965-66

Advisory Committee, *California Membership Campaign*, 1966-67

Key Man - Committee, *Herald of Truth*, National Radio and
Television, 1968-70

YOUTH AND FAMILY

Summer Camp

Camp Tanda, Big Bear Lake, Calif.

Co-Director, *Children's Camp*, 1965-1966

Co-Director, *Orange County Children's Camp*, 1969

Speaker: *Labor Day Family Encampment*, 1964, 1968,
1969; *Children's Camp*, 1966; *Family Grand Encampment*,
1966, 1969, 1970

Instructor: *Children's Camp*, 1965; *Family Grand Encampment*, 1966

Palomar Church Camp, Mt. Palomar, Calif.: Speaker, Class
Instructor, 1969

CHAPLAINCY: Relief Chaplain, Riverside General Hospital, Riverside,
Calif., 1964-67

TELEVISION: Meditations, Channel 2, Tulsa, Okla., 1964

PERSONAL

BORN: Holdenville, Okla., Oct. 15, 1935

REARED: Stockton, Calif.

FAMILY

Married Diana Gail Young, Sept. 8, 1957, Lodi, Calif.

Children

Mark William, Sept. 29, 1958, Los Angeles, Calif.

Martin Duane, Oct. 30, 1960, Fresno, Calif.
John Thomas, Dec. 22, 1966, Riverside, Calif.

RESIDENCE

1967 Morgan Ave.
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Benevolence is undoubtedly one of the broadest of all Bible themes, embracing, as it does, both human and divine expressions of good will in the world. God is seen as infinitely benevolent, giving gifts to all His creatures and requiring that man, His very own image, imitate this part of His nature. Therefore, God's people in the Bible are seen extending benevolence to family, friend, slave, animal, and even enemy, in a great variety of sometimes unrelated activities.

Not that I will range so widely. But I do want to stay away from a discussion that would narrow down benevolence to a single category. What I want to say is that the Bible insists on our assuming responsibility for the welfare of our fellowman and that our obligation be carried out in concrete expressions of good will, hospitality, mercy and fair play which are especially suitable for the occasion.

AN OLD TESTAMENT IMPERATIVE

Hospitality, one of the principal aspects of biblical benevolence, was a feature in the lives of God's people long before the Law enjoined and codified it. Oddly, the best

indication of the high regard the ancients held for it is seen in one of the uglier episodes of the Old Testament, the account of the angels in Lot's house (Genesis 19:1-11). The Sodomites had surrounded the place and were demanding that the angels be remanded for sexual relations. But Lot, comporting with the Oriental host's obligation to protect his guests at all costs, offered his daughters instead. An almost-identical story is found in Judges 19 where a host protects his guest from the perverted Benjamites by offering them his own daughter.

From these accounts we see that benevolence—at least one aspect of it—was an ancient compulsion. Abraham's demand that the travelers (Lot's later guests) turn aside from their journey for food and refreshment (Genesis 18:1-8) may indicate the presence of a standing religious law on benevolence even in those days. And not only that, but the New Testament's evaluation of Rahab's concealment of the Israeli spies indicates that God's determination of one's righteousness in those times could have been based on one's hospitality as much as anything else (Hebrews 11:31; Joshua 2).

Benevolence was a great feature of the Law and was systematized to the point of refinement. Indeed, for quantity and quality required, the benevolent aspects of the Law must be regarded as the most comprehensive of all religious and civil systems.

The wide range of Israelite benevolence will be seen in the following: the farmer could not reap his entire crop but had to leave gleanings for the poor and the stranger (Leviticus 23:22); every new house was required to have a guardrail around the roof to keep anyone from falling (Deuteronomy 22:8); an ox could not be kept from eating grain as he trod it

out (Deuteronomy 25:4); a man could not marry more concubines that he could satisfy maritally (Exodus 21:10); Hebrew slaves were to be freed after six years of service (Deuteronomy 15:12).

So then: benevolence in pre-Christian times was venerated and encouraged both by custom and commandment. It is interesting to note that even "the nations" regarded it as a special expression of humanity at its highest. Mencius (c. 372-289 B.C.) voiced a prevailing sentiment when he wrote: "Benevolence is the distinguishing characteristic of man. As embodied in man's conduct, it is called the path of duty" (*Discourses*, VII). At least most of the world appreciated benevolence even if it did so often fail to practice it.

A NEW TESTAMENT DYNAMIC

The need for benevolence in the New Testament world was, if anything, more acute than ever before. The already-large ranks of the poor were swollen even more by persons who had been displaced and deposed by the Roman conquests. Every large city hosted vast hordes of the homeless and hungry who stayed alive by a combination of wit, thievery and the dole.

Under the Romans, there was a welfare system but it was too often administered in token fashion as a mere political expedient. Welfare programs under provincial governments were no better as a rule. Even the Jewish system was callous and some of Christ's most scathing denunciations were directed toward its failure.

A poor person who fell ill and had no family to care for him would likely die in the streets. Those who were

imprisoned might die of hunger if friends did not visit them with food. A person of meager means could find himself in all manner of trouble in strange territories if some good citizen would not take him in. The benevolent obligations of Matthew 25:31-46 are best understood in light of these conditions.

The real distinction of benevolence in the New Testament lies principally within the meanings Jesus gives it. The most far-reaching thing he shows us is that a lack of benevolence in one's life invalidates everything else one may be or do religiously. The Priest and the Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan are not there incidentally. Jesus intentionally includes them to point up the futility of a religion which is so perfunctory and self-occupied that it can tromp on past human misery with no compunction.

According to Jesus, he who spurns his brother in need has spurned the Lord (Matthew 25:45) and serving one's fellowman entails a ministry to the Lord himself (Matthew 25:40; cf. I John 4:20). It is not surprising that Jesus would connect the commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18), to the commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God . . ." (Deuteronomy 6:5); the two are inseparable and to keep or break one is to do likewise to the other (see Matthew 22:34ff.).

Crucial to an appreciation of biblical benevolence is the fact that Jesus did not arbitrarily divide man into body and spirit and deal exclusively with one or the other. He saw man as multi-dimensional and insisted on worship from the whole being (Matthew 22:37). Conversely, he ministered to the whole being. It is significant that he saw in some cases of physical illness a spiritual cause (John 5:14; cf. Luke

13:10-16) and dealt with both. The feedings of the 5,000 and the 4,000 are especially meaningful in this regard because they illustrate that Jesus did not carry on a ministry of the Word without a ministry of creature comforts. We may take it that the imitation of Christ requires a ministry to all that man is.

Benevolence was a central feature in the lives of the first Christians. We must make careful note of the fact that it was not simply part of "the church program." First of all, it was the fruit of the Spirit ("kindness, goodness," Galatians 5:22) and, as such, was not so much forced as forthcoming. Then, its application was based on real human need and could vary with the circumstance. Conditions in Jerusalem demanded a community of goods (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-5:11; 6:1-7), an application that was certainly timely rather than normative. Other conditions demanded special collections (II Corinthians 8, 9), relief rolls (I Timothy 5:3-16) and lodging for the missionary brethren (III John).

There is a feeling among some today that Christian benevolence should be almost altogether for brethren in the church unless it can be used as an evangelistic tool. Nothing could be more alien to the biblical spirit. Benevolence was to be directed toward all men (Galatians 6:10) for the good it could do. I see no need to try to justify it on the basis that it might help save souls. Naturally, it can and does have a great evangelistic influence and many have been converted because of some aspect of it; but a studied, intentional use of it only for evangelism totally misses the point.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

I have found a certain degree of apprehension over the course Christians should pursue in the practice of

benevolence today. The problem is easy to see. On one hand is the Christian conscience and the gnawing compulsion to do something sacrificial to help the human condition. But on the other hand, practically every need can be met by Medicare, Social Security, pension programs, the Salvation Army and the Red Cross. And in most cases, the benevolence an individual Christian or a congregation might offer is vastly inferior to the services the other agencies can extend.

The dilemma can be solved if we keep in mind the biblical precept that benevolence is as many-sided as the proverbial elephant. And there is absolutely nothing in the Bible that prescribes one type of benevolence over and above all the others. If our governmental and civic programs are providing for the needy to the point where their requirements are met, well and good. The Christian can go on to other levels of benevolence and refine his services.

There are several ways to revitalize Christian benevolence today. First, let us re-emphasize Jesus' approach—a ministry to the whole man. When we do that, we will find ourselves entering every area of human need whether it be physical, intellectual or spiritual. We will avoid the “bread-king” extreme—feeding and clothing the body without regard for the inner man. By the same token, we will avoid trying to save souls without paying attention to the other needs of the world.

Second, we can emphasize what I would like to call “preventive benevolence.” Most Christian benevolence comes after the crisis is over; in other words, it is largely rehabilitative. Humpty-Dumpty has fallen and we rightly feel an obligation to try to put him together again. But if that's good, isn't it just as good to try to keep him from falling

down in the first place? Space does not allow me to detail a program, so I can only ask you to let your mind range over such problems as divorce, alcoholism, illegitimate children, juvenile delinquency, suicide and mental illness and consider the fact that in each case Christian influence could be directed toward prevention.

Finally, even in our welfare state, the Christian still has an excellent opportunity to engage in one of the finest aspects of benevolence—increasing and refining the quality of all of his domestic and social relationships. In fact, only as he exhibits the spirit of good will, kindness and mercy to those with whom he lives and works can he be described as truly-benevolent in the fullest Christian sense.

Let me finish this section by saying that Christians, despite the accomplishments of organized benevolence in this age, should regard their obligations as seriously as ever. Only the emphases should be changed.

A SUMMARY

What does the Bible teach about benevolence? Undoubtedly, the Parable of the Good Samaritan is the best statement of the Bible's overall view. It portrays the fact that some people are better off than others and that, in such a blessed state, they have an obligation to share generously with those who have fallen on hard times or calamity. And though it chides corporate religion for failure and hypocrisy, it also throws a mighty obligation on my shoulders. It holds me personally responsible for my brother's welfare and tells me to transcend every barrier to minister to his every need with every means at my disposal.

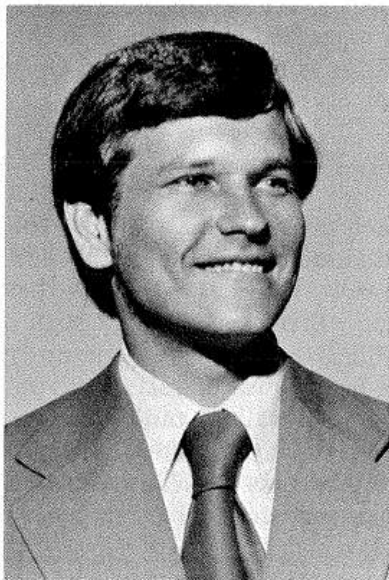
PRACTICING JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE POOR

Doug Kostowski

Doug Kostowski is a Michigander. Flint was his home until college days. He was influenced to preach by Jack Gray and Jimmy Allen.

His educational experience includes degrees from Freed-Hardeman College and Harding College where he was active in the Speech Departments and president of the intercollegiate debate society and forensic fraternity Phi Rho Pi. Graduate studies have been made at Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis and Wayne State University in Detroit.

Throughout the states and Canada Doug has been a spokesman for youth meetings and evangelistic crusades. Since '65 he has been a key man with the Herald of Truth, frequently appearing in mass-communications workshops. Lectureship invitations have been extended



from Freed-Hardeman College, Abilene Christian College and Pepperdine University. At Harding Doug coordinated the summer youth forum for three years, and in January '71 was guest seminar speaker on "Meeting Man's Needs in the Cities." Since the pulpit assignment in Paragould, Arkansas, his local ministry has been dedicated to the metropolitan areas. Five years were spent with the Highland church in Detroit before coming to Los Angeles to work with the Inglewood church in June, 1972.

Doug's wife Kit is from Harriman, Tennessee. They met at Freed-Hardeman Col-

lege and are now the parents of two children, Keri and Kirk.

I. *Jesus Identified With the Poor*

A. Prolegomena

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (II Cor. 8:9). Such a spirit is commended to all believers: “Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5-6). Hence, we have the mind-dazzling doctrine of *kenosis*, where Jesus voluntarily emptied and impoverished himself, becoming divested of his privileges when taking on human form.¹

The contrast in Paul's mind is the infinite contrast between the heavenly nature of Christ and his condition as a man, subject to all human weaknesses and limitations. If he had appeared on earth not as a carpenter, but as high priest or Roman emperor, the distance between this his former station would have been perceptibly less.²

¹ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, “Kenosis,” *A Green-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 429.

² Ernest F. Scott and Robert R. Wicks, *Philippians*, Vol. XI of *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick (12 vols., New York: Abingdon, 1951-57), p. 49.

B. Birth

The assumed poverty of the Son of God was apparent even from birth. His mother felt that the Lord had "regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" (Lk. 1:48). Her low estate was intensified by the uncomfortable eighty mile trip to somewhat unimpressive Bethlehem and was culminated in the flashing neon—No Vacancy! "And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Lk. 2:7). "No place in the inn" was symbolic of what was to follow; the only place with room would be on a cross.

In keeping with the spirit of the occasion, the first inquisitive guests to arrive were the lowly shepherds (Lk. 2:8-20). Since the days of the Exodus they had been subordinate in the Jewish community and were often despised by the orthodox good people of the day.³

After the baby was forty days of age, Mary went to the temple for her purification and to offer a sacrifice according to the law. Her offering of two young pigeons (Lk. 2:24) was technically called "the offering of the poor."⁴ It was provided for those who could not afford a lamb (Lev. 12:8).

C. Home Life

The offering is indicative of the home life of our Lord. It was simple and plain. Income from Joseph's carpentry trade

³ Barclay, William, *The Gospel of Luke*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

had to be stretched; there would be no luxuries. In a large family there are many mouths to feed and backs to clothe (Mt. 12:55-56). Here is a home which knew the haunting insecurity of life caused by the difficulty of making ends meet.

D. Ministry

As the Messiah chose to enter the lives of humanity he was met with a question that probed his background and identity—"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn. 14:6). Jerusalem, yes . . . or maybe even Mt. Olympus . . . but Nazareth???

When Jesus began to move among the people he called the humble to accompany him. His first selections were Galilean fishermen (Mt. 4:18-22). The religious leaders thought he spent too much time in the lower echelons of society and so they asked, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Mk. 2:16). He moved easily among the first century Mafia and the infamous.

The one who could say of himself, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Mt. 8:20), could find it easy to identify with the *am ha 'aretz*, the people of the land. Such common folk were even defended by Jesus from the attacks of the Pharisees (Mk. 7:1-5; Lk. 11:37-41). "The feeling of the Pharisaic elite find expression in John 7:49, where the word *ochlos*, 'crowd,' is applied with contempt to the

ignorant masses who do not know the law.”⁵ No wonder the common people (*ochlos*, lit., the huge crowd) heard Jesus gladly (Mk. 12:37).⁶

From the outset of his ministry Jesus announced that he had been sent to release men from sin and disease, and that the means would be healing and preaching good news to the poor (Lk. 4:18-19). Such proved not to be idle talk (Lk. 7:22).

In the first century sickness and poverty went hand in hand, because the ill or infirm could not earn a livelihood and were often reduced to begging. It was not unknown for the sick to suffer much from the treatment of many physicians who were unable to heal but who nevertheless charged their fees. Such persons, exhausted physically and financially, also sank among the ranks of the poor (Mk. 5:25-34; Mt. 9:20-22; Lk. 8:43-48).⁷

And so the twisted, wretched, inflamed and demented paraded to him; Jesus had a moving hospital of patients (Mt. 4:23-25; 9:35).⁸

The humanity of Jesus is seen as the Lord becomes hungry, thirsty and even fatigued (Jn. 4:6-8). This should not

⁵ M. H. Pope, “Am ha’aretz,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 106.

⁶ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (6 vols.; Nashville, Broadman Press, 1930), V, 134.

⁷ Richard Batey, *Jesus and the Poor* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1972), pp. 9-10.

⁸ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, I, 36.

be confused with his voluntary fast (Mt. 4:2; Lk. 4:2). Consequently he was able to say: "I have compassion on the crowd . . . I am unwilling to send them away hungry" (Mt. 15:32). And so Jesus provided for these common people, the poor. So impressive was his care for the 5,000 families on one occasion that all four of the evangels made the event part of their narrative (Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-15).⁹

This was followed by the feeding of the 4,000 men, besides women and children (Mt. 15:32-39; Mk. 8:1-10).

Financially the Twelve worked out of a common fund. Many women contributed to this cause as they accompanied Jesus and the apostles (Lk. 8:1-3). Judas was the treasurer. He was conservative with the cash supposedly in the interest of the poor, whereas in reality he was an embezzler. When Jesus was anointed with a fine nard, Judas proffered the opinion that it should have been sold and given to the poor. John, however, discloses his motive: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it" (Jn. 12:6). In this context Jesus replied, "The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me" (Jn. 12:8). A later incident with Judas gives the impression that frequently Jesus would suggest that an offering be given to the poor out of the general fund (Jn. 13:29).

⁹ Until the passion portion of the Gospels, only the baptism of Jesus and the imprisonment of John are included by all four writers.

The poor have long had problems coming up with tax money, and so it was on one due date for Jesus and Peter. The Lord solved the problem in a uniquely unforgettable way! (Mt. 17:24-27). In his ministry Jesus demonstrated his concern for the poor from an inside perspective—he was one of them.

E. Passion

There are some striking identifications with the poor even in the Lord's Passion. The week began with his entry into the Holy City. It was a moment of triumph. The crowd longed to have him as king; they cried to the Messiah, "Hosanna"! (Lit., "Save now"). And yet not all the marks of the event were regal. In place of a proud, white steed, the usual symbol of kingly victory, Jesus, in humility, rode upon an ass. The animal had to be borrowed. Instead of royal colors on the beast's back, Jesus sat upon the garments of the poor who followed him. Others used their garments to line the way; some threw out common leaves (Mt. 21:1-11; Mk. 11:1-11; Lk. 19:29-44; Jn. 12:12-19).

The claim to be king of the Jews proved to be sufficient grounds to prompt Jesus' capture and subsequent death. During his trial, as so often in the case of the poor, Jesus stood defenseless without a lawyer. In a contemptible way, a robe of mocking was placed upon the shoulders which had been covered by a simple garment. The contrast was heightened because it was a kingly robe of scarlet. In jest, poverty had vanished for wealth. The motif was completed with makeshift crown and scepter (Mt. 27:27-31; Mk. 15:16-20; Jn. 19:1-3, 23-25.).

The cross followed and at last death was pronounced. The Passion ends with the lifeless body of the Lord laid in a borrowed tomb (Mt. 27:57-60; Mk. 15:42-46; Lk. 23:50-53; Jn. 19:38-42). Yes, we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sake he became the poor suffering servant of God (cf. Isa. 53).

II. *Jesus' Attitude Toward the Poor*

Having traced the birth, home life, ministry and Passion of Jesus, we are made aware of his identification with the poor. Yet, beyond these events are truths and applications that are important in discovering Jesus' attitude toward the poor.

A. Theology of Reversal¹⁰

As Matthew introduces the formal teaching of Jesus, it is with broken silence from the side of a mountain: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:3). Some do not see economic implications, so a look at Luke's account is helpful: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Lk. 6:20). A series of woes follow in tirade form: "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation" . . . etc. (Lk. 6:24-26). Not only would the rich find it difficult to enter the kingdom (Mk. 10:25), but they would be continually under the threat of choking out (Mk. 4:19). And so the young man with "great possessions" could not enter the kingdom, because he was

¹⁰ See the informative section so titled in Batey, *Jesus and the Poor*, pp. 18-22.

unwilling to sell and give to the poor (Mt. 19:16-22). Those who would leave behind anything in seeking the kingdom would not be disappointed in life nor in the age to come (Lk. 18:28-30).

Although the Greeks had two words for "poor"—*penes* and *ptochos*, it is the latter in the New Testament with two exceptions (Lk. 21:2; II Cor. 9-9). Whereas *penes* described the working man for whom living was a struggle, *ptochos* described abject poverty. It was this man who not only was lacking in this world's goods, but because he was poor had become downtrodden and oppressed, and who ultimately had no influence on earth, no power, no prestige. Hence, the root idea of "crouching" or "cowering" is understood. With all the help and resources of earth closed, the poor could only look to God; therefore, Jesus in his sermon calls them "blessed," because in having nothing on earth they have come to put their complete and total trust in God. Realizing their own abject helplessness, they have become recipients of the riches of the grace of God.¹¹ As the sermon progressed, Jesus gave his antidote for materialism—seek God's kingdom first, and all these things shall be yours as well (Mt. 6:25-34; Lk. 12:22-34).

Many values commonly accepted would be reversed in the kingdom. Dives and Lazarus, the classic story of Jesus, graphically illustrates this point (Lk. 16:19-31). The rich man became a beggar and the poor man became rich! Because the poor were often oppressed by the rich, the poor were

¹¹ William Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), pp. 109-111.

considered to be the special objects of God's protection and deliverance. Psalms is replete with such references (cf. 10; 41-etc.). In this way the concept of the "pious poor" developed.^{1 2}

As Jesus continued to describe the inversion that would take place in the kingdom, he told who it was that would be within—not the expected ones at all! In the story of the poor man, beaten, robbed and left for dead, the religious leaders passed by him, but the Samaritan, of all people, gave aid (Lk. 10:25-37).

Those in the kingdom are so different that when they give a party they do not invite their friends, relatives and rich neighbors, but the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind (Lk. 14:12-14). And once when the invited guests excused themselves from the great banquet, the servants were sent out into the streets of the city to bring in the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind (Lk. 14:15-24). Even the penniless prodigal is accepted with love, while outside in his smugness the elder brother looks on (Lk. 15:11-32). Such a reversal would occur between the sinners and the supposedly religious (Lk. 15:1-2). This apocalyptic thrust of Jesus' message, as seen from the above, is especially apparent in Luke.^{1 3}

^{1 2} Batey, *Jesus and the Poor*, p. 92.

^{1 3} *Ibid.*, p. 18.

B. Living for Others

Jesus' invitation to discipleship was bold: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." He then added a word of motivation; it was paradoxical: "For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mk. 8:34-34). His followers did not believe that life is measured by the abundance of possessions, because they were taught: "Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourselves . . . with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Lk. 12:15, 33-34). The kingdom is not for the covetous, but for those who freely give. We are to be rich toward God, not laying up treasure for ourselves (cf. Lk. 12:15-21).

In living for others we must give to him who begs, and must not refuse him who would borrow (Mt. 5:42). The only qualification is upon the giver! "When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do." (Mt. 6:1-4). Ostentatiousness nullifies eternal reward. The physically handicapped were often poor beggars. Alms were to be given to them. Jesus delivered from begging blind Bartimaeus of Jericho by restoring his sight; he gave him what he could (Mk. 10:46-52; Lk. 18:35-43).

In the scribes who had been appointed to administer the property of widows, Jesus saw selfish greed which would even rip-off their real estate if the opportunity presented itself. Jesus was thus moved to say, "Beware of the scribes." And it was after that warning that Jesus sat opposite the treasury in the temple watching the giving of gifts, and although "rich people put in large sums," he remained

unimpressed until a poor widow put in two copper coins, a penny. He asked his disciples to remember that scene: "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had" (Mk. 12:38-44; Lk. 20:45-21;4). This widow who lived for others was closer to God than the long-praying scribes.

The neglect of poor aged parents received the same stern condemnation. The Jews had an interesting way for refusing financial help to their parents. Their tradition allowed them to make a pledge, at the moment of their parents' request, of a similar sum, to be given to God's temple. One word—corban, i.e., given to God—ended the matter for them! Jesus accused them of having "a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God" (Mk. 7:9-13) which was an obvious reference to the Decalogue (Ex. 20:12). Jesus echoed his Father's teaching concerning poor parents. Even from the cross, when Jesus saw his mother, he entrusted her to the care of "the disciple whom he loved" (Jn. 19:26-27). It is assumed that Joseph had died and Mary was dependent on her children, Jesus being her eldest.

Those contemplating the kingdom were given an opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to live for others by sharing with others. First Jesus sent the Twelve to them—on a mission with instructions to take nothing, no bread, no bag, no money (Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 9:1-6). Later the Seventy were commissioned to eat and drink from house to house, for the laborer deserves his wages (Lk. 10:1-12). Hospitable disciples have sometimes "entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2).

In imitation of Jesus, the Man for Others, his people the church, should be living for others also. His self-sacrificing

spirit must challenge us as it did the tax collector, Zacchaeus, who upon feeling the salvation that had come to his house, announced: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor" (Lk. 19:1-10). This is the true spirit of living for others.

C. Because Jesus Is Worthy

Before some reach out to help the poor they question their worth, cautioning others to be careful with the Lord's money, after all, they would not want to be taken. But the great truth of Heaven is that we help people not because of their worth, but because Jesus is worthy. Israel was reminded that they were only delivered slaves (Dt. 24:22), and we must remember that how ever much we do, how good we may ever become, "We are unworthy servants" (Lk. 17:10), who have been redeemed by the grace of God.

In the early church . . . charity was not determined by moral worth because the community itself was predicated on the experience of grace and the acceptance of sinners. Neither was assistance granted as an enticement or incentive for one's becoming respectable. Rather, the Christian's morality was grounded in the experience of grace, where forgiveness and acceptance were expressions of divine love.¹⁴

If in God's Judgment Heaven were only for the worthy, none of us could enter. Therefore, we must never shirk from our responsibility to the poor because of their lack of worth.

¹⁴ Batey, *Jesus and the Poor*, p. 44.

In Jesus' teaching, treatment of the poor and Judgment go together. Those who in life respond to the love that saved them by loving others with simple deeds—food and drink for the hungry, a welcome for the stranger, clothes for the naked, a visit for the sick or imprisoned—will hear the voice of Jesus in Judgment: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me . . . Come . . . inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . . and they will go . . . into eternal life” (Mt. 25:31-46). In the same passage, those who do not respond to the needs of others are separated into eternal punishment.

Simon the Pharisee learned at his dinner table that those forgiven much, love much in return, but those who are forgiven little, love little (Lk. 7:36-50). Believers should love much! It should not be unusual to witness those who have experienced the joy of their salvation, having regeneration in one hand and a cup of water for someone else in the other hand (cf. Mk. 9:40). Our redeemer is worthy.

III. Practicing Jesus' Attitude Toward the Poor

When Jesus emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, he identified with the poor in a comprehensive way—his threatened birth, his simple home life, his houseless ministry, his impoverished Passion. The masses of his day were impressed with his mission to preach good news to them, the poor, to share their hunger, to feel their tax burden. Out of compassion he healed their sick, fed their hungry and challenged their souls with the values of God's kingdom, the joy of living for others, and the way that love responds to human need.

Those who would practice Jesus' attitude toward the poor must be led in similar paths of discipleship and service. For him there was no dichotomy between preaching the gospel and relieving human need (cf. Mt. 9:35-38). In the notable event concerning the 5,000, Jesus fed both spirit and body. In his example of a truly loving neighbor, the Samaritan proved to be a Son of the Kingdom by caring for the criminally assaulted, by immediate first aid, by medicine for the body, by emergency housing, free transportation, finances to cover all expenses and open-ended credit for subsequent needs.

Perry C. Cotham succinctly outlines our alternatives:

The choice before us, either collectively or individually, is the ethic of withdrawal or the ethic of identification, the ethic of escapism or the ethic of involvement. God's call to us in Christ is to live decisively for him as Christ lived and as he instructed his disciples to live. The "man for others" emptied himself for us and gave his all. For Christ's sake, why can't the church—the body of people that claims to follow most closely his command and example—take a few risks for others.¹⁵

¹⁵ Cotham, Perry C. "The Ethic of Escapism vs. the Ethic of Involvement (2)." *Firm Foundation*, LXXXIX (September 26, 1972), 618.

TOWARD A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MARRIAGE

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As our American society has become increasingly secularized and the pressures of modern living have intensified, the marriage ethic of the American people has changed drastically. That change has become even greater in the last few years within the context of the subcultural and sexual revolutions.

The churches of Christ have not escaped from these changes. Whereas divorce was virtually unknown in our Christian homes, it has become increasingly common. It is granted that the "innocent" party in a divorce secured because of marital unfaithfulness is permitted scripturally to remarry (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). But it is certainly soul-searching that the "guilty" party in such affairs is usually lost to the church—that means in most cases a soul is lost. The member of such broken marriages is increasing. (Compare, for example, the testimony of the ACC alumni office of the mounting number of divorces among our own ex-students.)

Besides the broken marriages, many others in our church communities are plagued by tensions, mental and emotional difficulties, separations, etc. (One young couple I know are separated and divorced because the boy was emotionally unable to accept the responsibilities of marriage and simply copped out and joined the subculture.) Much time is spent by ministers and elders counseling with married couples over incompatibility and problems of adjustment, which all too frequently today are leading to the divorce courts and to remarriage by one or both of the parties.

If the church is the saving institution that God intended it to be and as it is presented in the Scriptures, it ought to be able to say something constructive and healing to these situations.

One thing that we might do is take a closer look at the Biblical ethic and theology of marriage and as preachers, teachers, and parents address ourselves to the problem of developing among our people a view of marriage that will give them the understanding and inner spiritual resources to live successfully as Christians in an increasingly worldly culture. We need, of course, to continue to stress that marriage is for life and that there is only one scriptural ground for divorce and remarriage. But we need also to enable our people (both young and old) to be able to resolve their conflicts so that their marriages become manageable in terms of human personal resources in regard to their interpersonal relationships as husbands and wives.

The Scriptures surely speak to these situations. What is proposed here is to take one example of Paul's instruction to Christian partners and probe it for insights it may give us. We choose for this Ephesians 5:22-33.

Ephesians 5:22-33

To begin, we need to remember that both the Jewish and the Greek-Roman societies had their corresponding soils where the seeds of tension could sprout and grow. The Jewish Old Testament law of marriage and divorce (Deut. 24:1ff.) is rightly seen as a protection of the woman's rights (a man could not just send a woman away as he would run off an animal). But the status of woman in the culture is seen in its proper perspective when it is remembered that the Rabbis taught the Jewish men to pray every morning to thank God that they were not "slaves, nor gentiles, nor

women."¹ (Paul was probably giving a corrective to these attitudes when he said that "in Christ there is neither slave nor free, Jew nor Gentile, male nor female.") Woman in the Greek-Roman society was perhaps even more of a non-entity.² She was regarded as an inferior, and this inferiority is treated in Greek literature (e. g., tragic drama) (Cf. Kittel). At home she played a minor role, being unseen by guests and yielding her place to the concubine (Greek *Hetairai*) slaves bought by her husband for his amusement. Though there were many noble Greek and Roman women and though they are often idealized in poetry (as the Hebrews did, cf. Proverbs 31), equality and just or even treatment for women were never the rule. It must be remembered that couples in ancient times did not "marry for love" in the modern romantic sense.

¹ Woman's inferior status is seen in part by such as the following: "A daughter is less desirable than a son (Lev. 12:1-5); she could be sold for a debt by her father (Ex. 21:7 cf. Neh. 5:5); she could not be freed at the end of six years, as a man (Lev. 24:40). She could be made a prostitute by her father (Judg. 19:24, but cf. Lev. 19:29). The man had the right of divorce. The valuation of a man differs from that of a woman when a special vow is made (Lev. 27:1-7)." O. J. Baab, *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Art "Woman."

² Cf. William Barclay. *The Letters of James and Peter* (The Daily Study Bible, Edinburgh, 1958). "In every sphere of ancient civilization, women had no rights at all. Under Jewish law a woman was a thing; she was owned by her husband in exactly the same way as he owned his sheep and his goats; on no account could she leave him, although he could dismiss her at any moment. For a wife to change her religion while her husband did not, was unthinkable. In Greek civilization the duty of the woman was 'to remain indoors and to be obedient to her husband.' It was the sign of a good woman that she must see as little, hear as little, and ask as little as possible. She had no kind of independent existence and no kind of mind of her own, and her husband could divorce her almost at caprice, so long as he returned her dowry. Under Roman law a woman had no rights. In law she remained for ever a child. When she was under her father she was under the patria potestas, the father's power, which gave the father even the right of life and death over her; and when she married she passed equally into the power of her husband. She was entirely subject to her husband and completely at his mercy." (Comment on 1 Peter 3:1ff).

Couples were usually betrothed by family contract and began married life with little knowledge of each other. Add to all this the fact that there was a reaction against these injustices in the form of a woman's liberation movement, and one can see that the situation to which Paul addressed himself was fraught with difficulty no less than ours.

To understand Paul's advice in the well-known passage of Ephesians 5:22-33, the context must be closely observed. First, the passage belongs to the exhortation (or paranetic) section of Paul's epistle. The transition from the doctrinal to the practical or hortatory part of the epistle is at 4:17. Compare here Colossians 3:1 ff.; Romans 12:1 ff.; Galatians 5:1 ff. Secondly, within this exhortation our passage belongs to a more-or-less-typical "domestic relations" section, (what the Germans call "*haustafeln*").³ Notice that beginning in 5:22 Paul admonishes in order: wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, and masters. Compare with this I Timothy where we have the order: old men, old women, young women, young men, widows, elders, slaves, masters, false teachers, rich people. (Also compare Col. 3:18-4:1; Titus 2:1-3:3). Such exhortations and regulations of the social structures of life were not peculiar to Christian instruction. The philosophical religions such as Stoics and Cynics (not to mention Hellenistic Judaism) applied their doctrinal principles in practical ways to the different stations of life. Paul's distinctive contribution thus is not in the fact that he invents new ethics or morals or applies them to new situations, but it is in the fact

³ To see how the exhortation and "house rules" sections of Paul's epistles fit into the structure of the letters see especially the comment on Colossians 3:1ff and 3:18ff in *A commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon* in the Hermeneia Series by Eduard Lohse and Helmut Koester (Philadelphia, 1972).

that he grounds them in Christian theology. Compare, for example, how he bases the slaves' fidelity upon the grace of God and the Second Coming of Christ (Titus 2:11 ff.) or how he exhorts Christians to be good citizens and neighbors in the light of God's mercy and justification by faith (Titus 3:1-7).

The significance of this for the interpretation of Ephesians 5:22-33 is very important. We commonly use the passage to preach a sermon on the doctrine of the church. It is true that Paul uses the relation of Christ and the church as his illustration, because the unity of Jew and Gentile in the church is the major doctrine or theme of the epistle. Marriage is thus a model for Christ and the church, his bride. But considering the context as it has been pointed out, I take the very opposite to be Paul's original intent. What he really does is to take the analogy of Christ's love for the church and the church's proper response as a model for the relationship of husband and wife.

Looked at in this relationship, let us analyze the text. Paul ends the doctrinal section of his letter by discussing the organizational gifts bestowed upon the church so that "the whole body grows and builds itself up through love" (4:16). This is followed by an exhortation to moral and ethical purity: "No longer live like the heathen." The standard is Christ (4:20). The Holy Spirit as the earnest of God's ownership is invoked in the following way:

Use only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those that hear you. . . . Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting and insults! No more hateful feelings of any sort! Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another as God has forgiven you in Christ (4:29-32).

Here Paul is not talking specifically to husbands and wives. But one might well ask what the application of such behavior on the part of couples who are engaged in a bitter "battle of the sexes" would be.

Paul continues his exhortations, applying the high ethical and moral principles to the general situations of life (5:1 ff.). He says, "As God's dear Children, you must try to be like him. Your life must be controlled by love (*agape*), just as Christ loved us and gave his life for us, as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice which pleases God" (5:1-2). At the end he summarizes by saying, "Submit yourselves to one another, because of your reverence for Christ" (5:21). Following all this in the passage on the duties of husband and wife toward each other Paul is thus making a specific application of the principles of Christian love and submission to one another as a solution to the problems of the marital union. We will analyze his admonitions first to the husband, then to the wife.

To the Husband

The admonition to the husbands is divided into two sections (1) the ethic of love developed after the analogy of Christ's love for the church, and (2) an admonition based upon a theology of the marriage union, where Christ and the church is again the analogy.

The Ethic of Love. Paul specifically enjoins on the husband the ethic of love:

⁴ The material in the *Pulpit Commentary* has been especially helpful in this analysis.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her.

In recent years there has been much talk in the church about Christian love. For this we can all be thankful. Hopefully we may begin to understand what this Biblical or apostolic love is and put it into practice. It is not emotional; it is not romantic or sexual love. Paul is not telling husbands to "stay in love," in the modern sense, with their wives. That kind of love was scarcely known to the ancient world (as it is still not in much of the world), where fathers or families made the match and love or courtship of the individuals being married was not a factor.

Instead, this love is to be understood in the ethical sense. It is the care for and concern for a person, not because he is especially good or lovable, but because he is a person, a being of divine origin and potential. It is not the action of returning goodwill for goodwill—indeed, it is to be exercised toward one's enemies or toward those who despise or hatefully use him (Matt. 5:38-48; Rom. 12:17:21). The measure of it is Christ's love for the church; husbands are to love them as Christ loves those of us who make up the church. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10).

This love is saving, cleansing, sanctifying. Christ's love is shown not only in his dying, but it includes his work of sanctifying the church as he "is cleansing her by the washing of the water by the word, that he might present the church to himself as a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (vss. 26-27). One thinks of Jesus' statement: "Every branch in me that brings forth fruit he cleanseth it that it

may bear more fruit. Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:2). The husband's love, then, is to be helpful, unselfish, not merely seeking gratification, but a love which conducts itself so that the beloved will be advanced in her well-being in every sense. This recalls the words of I Peter 3:7, "Husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being joint heirs of the grace of life." If we as Christian husbands were interested in our spouses in such a way as to promote their physical, mental, and spiritual welfare, if we were willing to forgive, care for, and treat in a nonretaliatory way—if we loved them "as Christ also loved the church," we might turn the whole trend of broken homes in the churches completely around.

The Theology of Marriage. But Paul has another word for the husband based upon the theology of the marriage relation. It is stated,

Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it . . . 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. (vss. 28-31 and quoting Gen. 2:24).

Paul says that he is speaking a mystery. That mystery is the fact that two bodies become one flesh in sexual union. Having been joined thus, the husband becomes part of the

⁵ On love in this sense see the article by Stauffer in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1964) and in the books on New Testament ethics, e. g., C. Anderson Scott, *New Testament Ethics* (Cambridge, 1934²).

wife and she of him. If this revelation is accepted, then it is as unnatural for a husband to hate and mistreat, to abuse or use as a mere object of self-gratification his wife who has become "flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone" as it would be to "hate a part of his own body."

Here, too, the relationship of Christ and the church furnishes the example. Paul says that the husband is not to hate his own flesh, but to nourish and cherish it, "even as Christ also the church, because we are members of his body." Our union with Christ in his body is a mystery no less than the "one flesh" of marriage. But the implication is clear: The church in some sense sprang out of the earthly body of Jesus. Had it not been for the incarnation, there would have been no church. Without his sacrificial death, no body of Christ would have been built from his resurrection. The earthly social body—the community of Christians—lives in continuity with that earthly body of her Lord, with whom she is joined in spiritual union. Compare I Corinthians 6:15-17. We do not pretend to understand what the Scripture is telling us, but the implication is plain. It would be unnatural to suppose that Christ could hate the church which is thus revealed to be his own flesh—his own body. "This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church. Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself."

To the Wife

The Duty of Submission, of Reverence. So far we have spoken of the admonition to husbands. But Paul has admonitions for the wives also:

Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ

also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything.

Again at the end of the section Paul says, "Let the wife see that she fears her husband" (vs. 33). Our modern society in particular may not like Paul's principal term here, "be in subjection." But this is because we view submission or the rendering of obedience in terms of naked power. Paul certainly is not thinking in any such terms. There is another kind of submission—that of voluntary surrender of one's will, by which one renders deference or acquiescence gladly through love and in respect to God's order in creation and redemption.

We should note in the beginning that what the apostle enjoins on wives he has just enjoined on every Christian: "Subjecting yourselves to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). Nor is this the only place where this is stated in God's word (I Cor. 16:16; I Peter 5:5). Perhaps the most crucial passage is Galatians 5:13, where Paul states the general obligation to service and submission in terms of Christian love: While we are freed from the law 'Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself,' we are not to use this as an occasion in the flesh but 'through love we are to be slaves to each other.'

But besides this general obligation there is the matter of order in God's creation. God's order in creation is responsible for the fact: The husband is the head of the wife, and the wife is to be in submission for this reason. But again Paul is anxious that this should be taken in the right way. The wife's submission to her husband is to be like her submission "to the lord."⁶ It ought to be no more repressive to the wife to

surrender voluntarily in love to her head, her husband, than to do the same to Christ. The church recognizes Christ as her head; she submits to him gladly because he is her saviour. The Greek word "saviour" and its cognates means a good deal more than we are likely to see in them. We think mostly of forgiveness of sins here and now and a final eschatological salvation hereafter. But to the early Christian world it meant not only these things, but protector, preserver, defender, or healer. Paul wants the Christian wife to see her role in the marriage in terms of the church's grateful surrender of her sovereign will to the loving lordship of Jesus.

Conclusion

What we have tried to do in a short discussion is to suggest that we apply Paul's ethic of love to our modern marriages. We all need to learn what it means to love as a disciple of Jesus (John 13:34). Paul seems to think that having learned the meaning of Christ's sacrifice and having settled our hearts to love all men—good and evil, loving and unloving—we should be prepared to apply the same principle to the interpersonal relationships within the closer bonds of family and home. Recently I heard it put this way. It is often said that marriage is a 50/50 proposition. Happy is the marriage where it works that way. But in many situations one partner may have to give, not 50% but 60, 70, 80% or more. How fortunate is the Christian partner who can find strength through the love of Christ to be "God's man" or "God's woman" and to love in such disproportionate amounts.

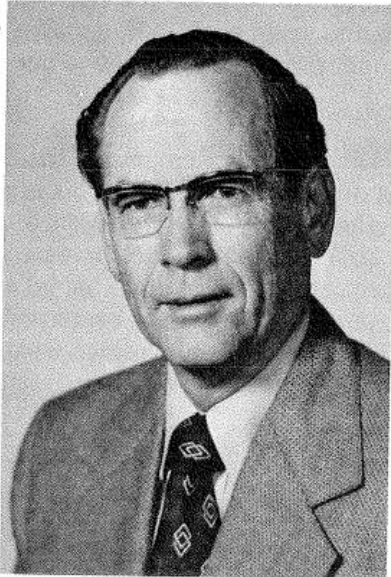
⁶ Compare Wm. Barclay, *Ibid.*: "She must be *submissive*. It is not a cringing and a spineless submission that is meant; it is the submission which, as someone has finely put it, is a 'voluntary selflessness.' It is the submission which is based on the death of pride, the abasing of self, and the instinctive desire to serve. It is not the submission of fear, but the submission of perfect love."

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

W. T. Hamilton

W. T. Hamilton was reared in Bowie, Texas where he graduated from high school in 1938. After attending North Texas State University and Freed-Hardeman College, where he graduated in 1943, he returned to Bowie for his first local work of nearly five years. He has held some forty meetings in the North Central Texas area near where he was reared. He has also done local work in Frederick, Oklahoma, and Gainesville, Lamesa, and Plainview, all in Texas. He presently is in his fourth year as minister of the College Street congregation in Waxahachie, Texas.

He is the author of two books, "Show Us The Father," which is an expository treatment of the Gospel of John, and "Yet Trouble Came," a widely used devotional work based on Job. He serves on the editorial counsel of "Power For Today," is a partner in the Nichols Brothers



Publishing Company, and has contributed numerous articles to most of the leading papers in the brotherhood. He has spoken on lectureships at Abilene Christian College, Freed-Hardeman, Fort Worth Christian, Oklahoma Christian, and Pepperdine, as well as the Texas Tech Bible Chair and numerous congregations. He has held meetings in fourteen states and preached in several others. He is listed in "Who's Who in Texas Today."

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If I had received this assignment several years ago, I could have answered questions that I can't answer now! It is not that the truth has changed, nor that I know less now than then. But several years of sitting on the other side of a desk from couples deeply troubled about divorce and remarriage, and trying to understand the Bible and to explain what Jesus taught in such a way as to help them out of a web of confusion, has enabled me to see more sides of this many-faceted problem. Like you, I, too, have heard more questions than answers. But just because we do not know all there is to know on the subject does not mean we should not strive to learn more as we examine again and again each Bible passage. Like any Bible subject, this one should be studied objectively.

This study is to deal with Divorce and Remarriage from the viewpoint of Jesus' teaching on Social Questions. This is a social question. During 1970 there were 715,000 divorces granted in the United States.¹ In 1971 that figure increased to 768,000 with seventy-five per cent of them breaking up a first marriage.² Even the children of the world are becoming alarmed about this. If the rate continues to increase, what will it do to our culture? our nation?

¹ See World Almanac, 1972

² Dallas Morning News, Oct. 25, 1972, page 3C, article by Ana Honig.

Our brotherhood is not exempt from this problem. Every sizeable congregation has within it those who have been divorced—many of them are questionable as to the status of their marriage. Preachers are not exempt. Perhaps each of you could name a score or more of preachers whose usefulness has been killed or greatly hampered because of divorce.

What did Jesus teach concerning this? In order to understand it better, one should consider the background. What has been God's plan for man and the marriage relationship through the ages?

AS IT WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE BEGINNING

When God made man, He saw it was not good for him to be alone, so he made a help meet for him (Gen. 2:18). He gave his law regulating this relationship in Gen. 2:24: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Jesus later stated this law in these words: "He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh" (Matt. 19:4-6). Then he added: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." This stated the ideal. This is God's plan for man.

AS IT ERODED AFTER THE FALL

Man did not act like God wanted him to for long! Genesis, chapter three, is the turning point in the story of man. He sinned! Sin separated him from God and all things changed for the worse. The fall affected all of man, including

the marriage relationship and the home. Man degenerated rapidly and this was evidenced especially by his attitude toward marriage. Before many years had passed the best of men to be found were doing things which were an abomination to God.

We could not charge the sons of Adam with incest when they married their own sisters, but what about later years when there was no necessity for such? It was forbidden by the law of Moses (Lev. 18:6), with specific prohibitions given in verses 7-18. (See also Lev. 20:11-21; Deut. 22:30; 27:20-23; Ezek. 22:11; and 1 Cor. 5:1). In an ugly situation Lot's daughters led him into this sin (Gen. 19:31-36). Reuben was called "unstable as water" because he defiled his father's bed (Gen. 35:22; 49:4). The story of Judah and Tamar continues to be a blot on the character of the patriarch (Gen. 38:16-18). Yet, marriage to one's close relatives continued to be tolerated as in the case of Abraham (Gen. 20:12,13), Amram (Exo. 6:20), and others.

Rape was a problem then, as now. Dinah fell victim to a Hivite and war followed (Gen. 34:2). The tribe of Benjamin was almost destroyed as a result of this sin (Judges 19:22-30). Amnon ravaged Tamar and there was trouble in the house of David (2 Sam. 13:6-29, 32,33).

Polygamy became a common practice—even among good men. In Abraham we see an example of the heartache it brought. Even though God tolerated it, He did not remove the natural consequences that such a perversion of the original purpose brought. Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac suffered. The sins of pride, contempt, jealousy, envy, mockery, partiality, and child desertion followed. "The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight" (Gen. 21:11).

Continued sin rendered man hard of heart. Woman became the chattel property of man. Human life was cheap. What would God do about this condition as he gave a law to the nation of Israel?

AS IT EVOLVED IN THE LAW OF MOSES

If some provision had not been made for the protection of woman, man could have killed his wife if he found anything undesirable in her. Because of the hardness of their hearts (Matt. 19:8) God made room for divorce. He did not command it, as the Pharisees later said, but He suffered (permitted) it. "For the hardness of your heart he wrote this precept" (Mk. 10:5). Deut. 24:1,2: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife." Let it be repeated that such a provision was not God's will, but was made because of the hardness of man's heart. God hated putting away (Mal. 2:16) even among the children of Israel.

And let it not be said that the divorce he permitted was granted because of fornication, for the law demanded that the one guilty of fornication be stoned to death (Lev. 20:10). It was not granted because of a suspicion of unchastity; Num. 5 tells of a test husbands were to give suspected wives. If he suspected fornication before marriage, there was a test of virginity to be given (Deut. 22:13-21). The "unseemly thing" must have been something other than the above. At the time the law was given, God permitted divorce and remarriage. Otherwise, the wives often would have been endangered.

AS IT WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

From this historical background we more clearly understand Jesus as he gave a law to govern his kingdom which was superior to that given by Moses. He said: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement; but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:31,32).

At a later time Jesus was questioned about this. Even though the questions of the Pharisees were prompted by a desire to ensnare him, they requested him to make plain his law. Would there be any room for divorce? Jesus responded by a plea for a restoration movement! He demanded the restoration of God's law as it existed in the beginning: "He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." When Jesus stated that demand for the restoration of God's original law they questioned him about Moses. He

explained. In the context of their inquiry about *any* cause for divorce, he pointed out the *only* exception: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9). Note that Jesus prefaced his statement with, "Have ye not read?" A failure to read God's book still causes most of our problems today!

The statement of this exception to God's rule made plain what otherwise would have been an insurmountable problem. Fornication is a sin against Christ (1 Cor. 6:13-20), against the church (1 Cor. 5), against the soul (Prov. 6:32,33), against one's own body (1 Cor. 6:18-20), and *against the home*. It basically undermines the sanctity of the home. Under the law of Moses, the fornicator was to be stoned to death. Physical death was not a penalty for fornication under the law of Christ, but still the sin was fundamentally destructive to the home. If the guilty party was not to be removed by stoning, some other provision needed to be made.

This instruction was to regulate the kingdom, and not to revise the Jewish law. The law permitted divorce for various causes (Deut. 24:1,2), and Jesus did not make laws to regulate the Jewish economy which were different from the ones given by Moses (Matt. 5:17; 23:1,2). He surely was not speaking of the time yet to come—when there will be no marrying or giving in marriage (Matt. 22:30). If it were not for the Christian dispensation, then to what time was he referring? Too, other instructions in the sermon on the mount showed that Jesus was speaking of his then coming kingdom. He spoke of fulfilling the law (Matt. 5:17,18) and of their entering the kingdom (v. 20). And in that context he began his "Ye have heard . . . but I say" statements. He made applications to murder and anger (v. 21-26), adultery and lust (v. 27-30), divorce and remarriage (v. 31,32), swearing (v. 33-37), revenge and returning good for evil (v. 38-42), and hate and love (v. 43-47). In each of these areas he obviously is showing a change for the better in man's relationship to his fellow man—these better things would be found in his kingdom. When Jesus said, "It has been said . . . but I say unto you" it should be obvious what he meant unless one is trying to wrest the Scriptures to fit some preconceived idea.

AS IT WAS EMPHASIZED BY HIS INSPIRED APOSTLES

In writing to the Christians at Rome showing that they should not keep the law of Moses, Paul illustrated the principle by using Jesus' teaching regulating divorce and re-marriage. "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Rom. 7:2,3). If they had not been familiar with Christ's principle, it would not have illustrated to them the truth Paul sought to impress.

Also, in 1 Cor. 7, Paul gives much instruction concerning the Christian home and especially the responsibilities of husbands and wives to each other. Concerning divorce, he included this statement: "Let not the wife depart from her husband; but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife" (v. 10,11). He also said: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth: but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (v. 39).

The statements of the inspired Paul are in perfect harmony with that which Jesus taught. Sometimes it is asked why there is no statement following Pentecost which says: "Except it be for fornication?" There is no necessity for such. When Jesus speaks once, that is sufficient. Exceptions to divine rules are not ordinarily stated unless the context demands it. For instance, when the Hebrews writer declared,

“It is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27), he did not say, “It is appointed unto men, except Enoch and Elijah, once to die.” Jesus only gave the exception in response to the questions, “Is it lawful?” and “Why did Moses?”

AS IT EXISTS IN THE TRADITIONS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

As a nation, we have come a long way from God’s original plan for man and marriage and happiness. And we have failed to hear Jesus’ demand for a restoration of the original. Instead of divorce being allowed for one cause only—fornication—man has demanded more and more liberty. Causes for which divorce can be granted in most states have constantly expanded. Some now allow divorce on fifty-two different grounds. The latest and rapidly becoming the most popular stand is “divorce without cause.” But that is not the final step. Marriage itself is being called in question. The marriage license is considered “just a piece of paper.” Trial marriage, no marriage, communal living, and wife-swapping, are being practiced more widely than we like to think. And it is the person who questions such that becomes the object of ridicule.

Man is inclined to interpret the Bible colored by the culture in which he lives. That makes it difficult for him to comprehend Jesus’ demand for a restoration of God’s original purpose for marriage. In order to maintain status with the “in crowd,” to gratify desire, and to live with one’s conscience, many have looked for loop-holes in God’s law! Almost every conceivable situation has been rationalized into acceptance. “I am as much against divorce as anybody, but under these circumstances . . .” How often do we hear that statement! That is situation ethics which has gone to seed! But, in this as

in all things, the truth is not determined by one's desire but by what God says. A general acceptance of man's fallen condition is no assurance of God's approval, and it is also a poor view from which to interpret the teaching of Jesus.

CONCLUSION

How can we handle this situation today? Is it lawful "under these circumstances" to divorce for many causes? Is it lawful to "divorce without cause?" Is it lawful to engage in modern communal marriage, trial marriage, no marriage, relationships? No doubt, Jesus would answer those asking about today's problems and traditions exactly as he did those who asked about these matters in the first century. "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6). A restoration of God's will for marriage as it existed in the beginning is the only solution. There was a day when God tolerated things contrary to his will. "At the time of this ignorance God winked at, but now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). The "winking days" are over. It is now time to return to God's original law.

Perhaps one area where our teaching could be strengthened is in the matter of prevention. Some knotty situations will never be straightened out. But proper teaching and example will help our young people to avoid these entanglements. Prevention is better, quicker, easier, safer, and more effective than cure. Let's teach our young people to marry properly. I have heard a great deal about "marrying in the

church” and I certainly think that is the safest thing to do. However, I have observed some members of the church who are not worth marrying! Let us make the base of our instruction to the young a little narrower than that “he is a member of the church.” Let us instill in them from early childhood, and insist over and over again, that the most rigid rule they follow in looking for a companion is “WILL THIS PERSON HELP ME TO GO TO HEAVEN?”

