

Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/May 1982



Vital Signs of a Healthy Church

Letters

As usual, readers square away in our mail this month, letting us know their reactions to what they have read. Where else can you argue your case before 255,000 readers? We love it—even the negative ones!

Drunkenness or abstinence?

The article "Alcohol: A Witness Against Itself," (March, 1982) is really an indictment of drunkenness and not alcohol as such. The Bible forbids drunkenness, but it hardly forbids use of alcohol itself, which was a common drink in Biblical times and circles. Some passages in the Psalms might almost be said to commend alcohol at the proper time. Heirs of the Reformation know that where the Bible is silent, the church has no call to improve upon it.—John Mason, Tenn.

An airtight scriptural case for total abstinence where alcohol is concerned may be difficult. But the same might be said with equal justification for polygamy. Surely even a moderate use of something as inherently deleterious as alcohol flies in the face of Paul's counsel: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Scripture is clear that Christians have a responsibility before God to

An outstretched hand

If you are receiving MINISTRY bimonthly without having paid for a subscription, it is not a mistake.

We believe the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Since 1928 MINISTRY has been designed to meet the needs of Seventh-day Adventist ministers. However, we believe that we have much in common with the entire religious community and want to share with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help for you too.

We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulders, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you cannot use.

Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Each request should be on your church letterhead (if possible) and include name, address, denominational affiliation and position. Clergy outside the U.S. and Canada please remit \$2.00 postage.

keep mind and body healthy and spiritually alert. Alcohol is incompatible with such a responsibility, it seems to us.—Editors.

Warm spot for historicists

The article by Gordon Hyde ("Jesus Is Coming Soon!" March, 1982) touched a warm spot in my heart. Seldom does one hear or read about those who believe in an "historical" approach to prophecy. I received a man into the church during my next-to-last charge who was a great scholar of prophecy and a historicist. He put me in touch with publications dealing with this theme.

I believe we are in the last times and that when Christ comes that will be it. I don't believe He is coming and then leaving again. The earth, which is His footstool, will be His throne. Thank you for MINISTRY. I appreciate and enjoy it.—Oliver J. Friedel, United Methodist Church, Pennsylvania.

Absurd canard?

Gordon M. Hyde's article in the March issue repeats the absurd canard that the Roman Catholic papacy is the antichrist. And what is more surprising, the editors assert the "continuing validity" of the false and insulting charge. No scholar of any standing, unless blinded by prejudice, would fail to note in the First and Second Epistles of St. John that the "spirit of antichrist" is a denial of the fact that the Word became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. What pope ever denied that our Lord is the Son of God made man?

Mr. Hyde makes much of the former persecutions of dissenters by the Roman Catholic Church. I have no intention of defending such acts, but would merely point out that the dissenters often acted the same way without being labeled antichrists! Read, for example, the life of Henry VIII of England, who, after rejecting the authority of the pope, persecuted both Catholics and Reformers.—A. V. McLees, Roman Catholic Church, New York.

In holding to the historical Reformation position regarding antichrist, we do not intend in any way to portray an unreasoning anti-Catholicism or bigotry. As pointed out, all of us, Protestants as well as Catholics (and certainly our own Adventist Church), have enough problems of our own without looking

for the problems of other Christians. We can understand our reader's feeling that only the most prejudiced could arrive at the conclusions expressed in the article. (Incidentally, the allusion to the nearly unanimous testimony of the Reformers regarding the antichrist amounted to one paragraph in a three-page article.) However, we cannot, in our opinion, be true to Scripture or to our Protestant heritage and deny the Biblical prediction that a spirit of antichrist would (and will) arise from within the church itself to remove the allegiance of men and women from Christ to human beings. This is the essence of antichrist. Such a position does not deny that the gospel was, and is, present in the Roman Church nor pass sentence upon any soul.—Editors.

Beware the "neo-evangelical"

I do not agree with your article "Is the Secret Rapture the Blessed Hope?" (January, 1982). Please remove my name from your mailing list. I don't want to receive any more copies of MINISTRY.—Joy Paul Schwenke, Baptist Church, Montana.

Have you noticed that not one Bible-believing, Biblicist, fundamental minister has written to compliment your magazine? Liberals, neo-evangelicals, et cetera—yes. The reason is that men who know God's Word have your number.—Clay Nuttall, Baptist Church, Michigan.

We don't try to categorize those who write to us as "Biblicists" or "neo-evangelicals," but it does seem that we get compliments (as well as brickbats) from a wide spectrum of Christian belief. A fellow Baptist (see the following letter) apparently has not yet "gotten our number," or perhaps is a "neo-evangelical"!—Editors.

I appreciate receiving MINISTRY and the quality of the articles. I may not always agree with everything printed, but I find most articles in the magazine helpful, and therefore useful, in shaping my thinking as a minister.—A. P. Brady, Baptist Church, Queensland, Australia.

As a busy pastor, I'm liable not to read mail. This month I did read MINISTRY. To my surprise (sorry about that), I find it prayerful, Christ-centered, Biblically oriented, and downright balanced.—Vic Fildes, United Church of Canada, Newfoundland.

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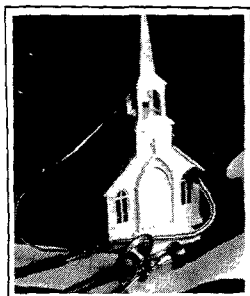
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Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/May 1982/Volume 55/Number 5



COVER: LUIS RAMIREZ

Vital Signs of a Healthy Church/4. Mark A. Finley.

Like people, churches have certain vital signs that indicate health and vigor. Apply this checklist to your church and see where first aid may be needed.

God on Trial/7. Herbert E. Douglass. Surely the One who is judge of the universe cannot Himself be judged! Yet, because Lucifer has called into question the character of God, there is a sense in which He allows Himself to be placed on trial before all His created subjects.

This Incomparable Jesus/10. In his book *The English Connection*, from which this article is adapted, Bryan W. Ball demonstrates the debt modern Christianity owes the great Puritan preachers and writers of seventeenth-century England. Much of Adventist theological thought can be traced to these Puritan roots. For more information about this important book, see pages 22, 23.

A Day of Mourning/12. Arnold Kurtz.

Christ or Antichrist: The Mysterious Gap in Daniel 9/14. Hans K. LaRondelle. Historically, the church has seen the seventy-week prophecy of Daniel 9 as referring to the Messiah, specifying the timing and details of Jesus' ministry. A popular reinterpretation in recent years has shaped many Christians' understanding of end-time events by separating the final week of Daniel's prophecy from the preceding sixty-nine, transposing it from the historical context of Jesus' ministry to the last days of earth, and applying it to the work of antichrist. Scriptural evidence is on the side of the traditional interpretation, says the author of this article.

What Jesus Said About Himself/18. Morris L. Venden.

Baptism: Union With Christ/20. George E. Rice.

The English Connection/22. J. R. Spangler.

You Are What You Think/26. Norman L. Mitchell.

To Love and to Cherish/28. Eleanor Zoellner.

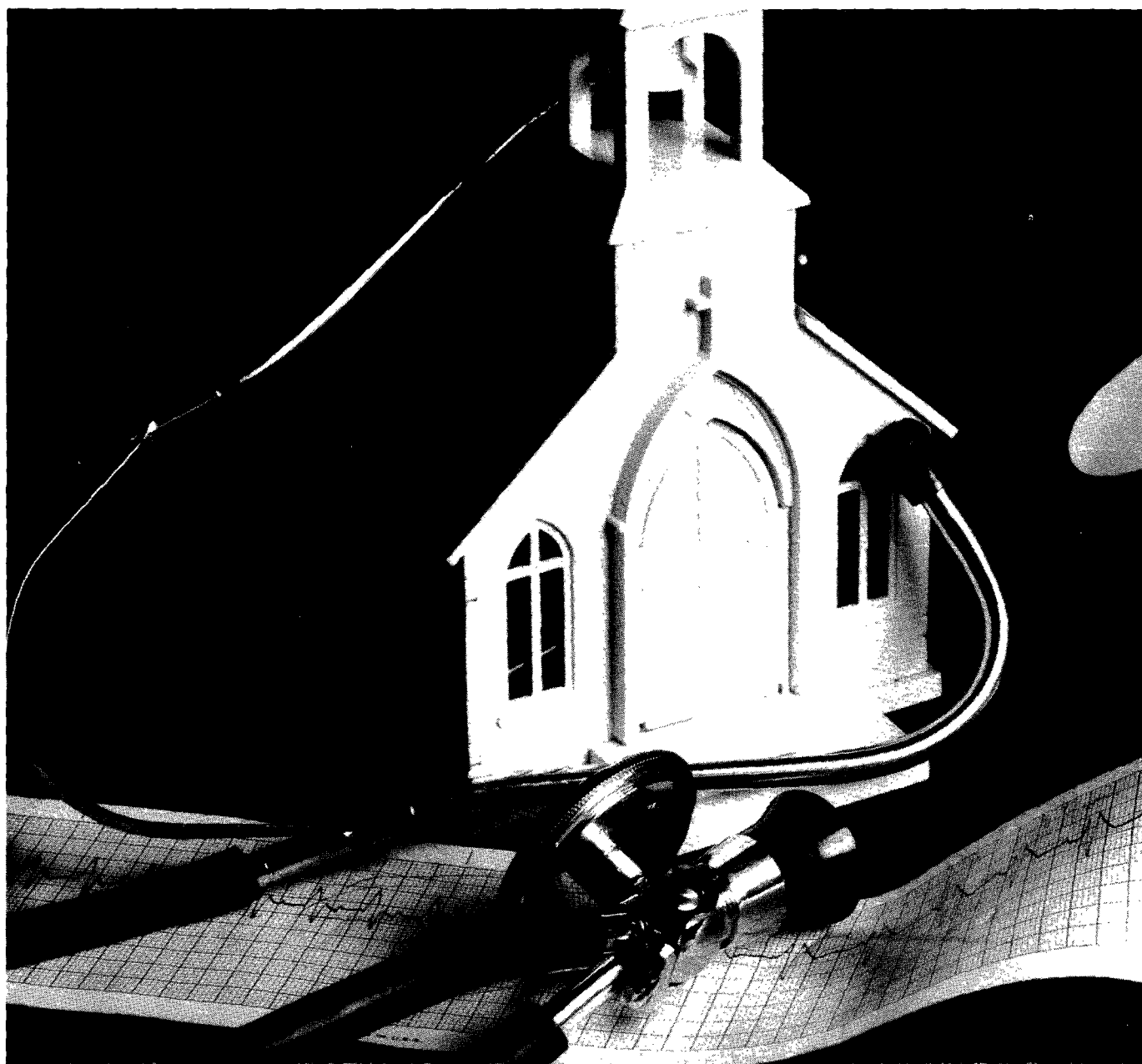
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When was the last time you saw a church die from old age? Not many do. But churches frequently linger for years neither dead nor really alive. Perhaps you can't put a thermometer in your church's mouth or take its blood pressure, but you can look for these five vital signs of a healthy, growing church!

Mark A. Finley

Vital signs of a healthy church



Certain vital signs indicate life in the human body. If the resting heart rate is fifty to seventy beats per minute, the blood pressure 120/80, the cholesterol lower than 200, and the temperature 98.6° F., you can be reasonably sure the body is in good health. Throughout Scripture Christ's church is compared to the human body. The interdependence of the body's organs, members, and systems illustrates the close working relationship and unity of the church. Are there, then, similar vital signs of a healthy, growing church? Can you take the pulse of a congregation to determine whether it is alive? I think so, and suggest five vital signs of a growing church.

Vital Sign No. 1: A spiritual pastor with dynamic faith and evangelistic vision.

The key person in the entire church growth experience is the pastor. The church with a pastor who believes that it is the will of God for his church to grow and that the purpose of the church is redemptive will see growth. If church growth is merely one of many congregational options or services, it will be inconsistent and sporadic.

"The church serves in many different ways; however, it must never forget its primary and irreplaceable task—bringing lost children back to the Father's house. Winning the lost is a fundamental function through which the church is recreated. The church both as individuals and as organizations is continually dying. Unless it is re-created by winning the lost, it fails in its greatest service to mankind, and soon there will be no church!"—Donald A. McGavran and Winfield Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 32.

Any pastor who is sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who takes the authority of the Bible seriously, and who prays intelligently and systematically about his evangelistic leadership will be able to arrange his priorities to enable his church to grow. The pastor must allow the Holy Spirit to burn into his soul a love for evangelism, outreach, and soul winning.

Despite many dissimilarities in other areas, all growing churches in America have at least one common ingredient—a pastor whom God is using to make it happen.

W. A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, credits his church's growth to expository preaching, yet Robert Schuller, of Garden Grove, California, rarely preaches an expository sermon. His topical messages communicate "possibility thinking."

James Kennedy, whose Coral Ridge Presbyterian church in Florida grew from seventeen to 2,500 members in just twelve years, credits house-to-house visitation and personal evangelism.

Stephen Olford in New York penetrates high-rise apartments through television. Richard Halverson finds that developing small *koinonia* groups in Washington, D.C., facilitates growth.

The conclusion is that although some predictable, foundational principles for growth can be established, the pastor whose soul is consumed with a burning desire to see lost men and women saved, the pastor who has the faith to believe that large numbers of people in his community can be won for Christ, the pastor who senses that God wants to move his church into action through his ministry, will see his church grow.

Vital Sign No. 2: A well-mobilized and carefully organized laity.

In the summer of 1981 I spent five weeks in a major evangelistic campaign in the Philippines. During this short period, hundreds attended our meetings, and more than two hundred were baptized. From 1910 to 1960 the Seventh-day Adventist Church grew slowly in the islands. By 1960 there were seventy-five thousand members. Yet in the next twenty years the church experienced a major growth explosion in which the membership skyrocketed to 255,000. In his analysis, Dr. Herman Reyes, of the Far Eastern Division's theological seminary, ranks "laymen's efforts" first among the factors most influential in this growth (45.7 percent of those surveyed checked this item as the primary factor in their conversion).

Yet the challenging question remains: How can the laity be inspired, trained, and equipped to witness? For a number of years I preached what I believed to be stirring sermons on witnessing. I proclaimed, "Go ye," yet most of my people did not go. I echoed Jesus' words, "Ye are witnesses," but the majority did not witness. I preached on Isaiah's passage, "Whom shall I send?" yet the response was not "Here am I; send me."

About that time I read a book by Dave Wilkerson, pastor of a suburban church in Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, in which he described his frustration and disappointment at the difficulty in leading his members to witness. It seemed that he just

could not get them to move out for God. All his coaxing and sermonizing did not accomplish it. Finally the root of the problem struck him. His church would not enter into an aggressive program of evangelism *unless he did!* He set aside every Tuesday and Thursday evening for witnessing. Visiting bowling alleys and pizza parlors throughout Philipsburg, he went fishing for the Lord. His converts began showing up in church. Fresh witnessing experiences became a regular part of the weekly service. Testimonies of changed lives electrified the congregation. Dave Wilkerson was no longer simply urging his membership to do what ought to be done; he was a living example of how to do it. As a result, his congregation became alive. This was Christ's method too. He taught His disciples through association with Himself. They did not simply hear about evangelism; they saw it lived before them.

Four simple steps characterize Jesus' training program. 1. He shared with His disciples the centrality of His mission and taught them how to witness. They learned the theory of witnessing. 2. He brought His disciples with Him into the cities and villages as He witnessed. They watched Him do it. 3. He sent them out two by two in personal field experience. They practiced what He taught them. 4. He evaluated their progress and suggested improvements. They reported to Him and continued learning. Matthew 4:19 summarizes Christ's training method. Beckoning to His choices for disciples, Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Do you want your church to grow? Stimulate and foster lay initiative. Train the laity for witnessing and service.

Vital Sign No. 3: A diversified, holistic ministry appealing to all segments of the community.

Have you ever noticed the wide variety of people that came to Jesus and His differing approaches to them? For example, look at the contrast between Nicodemus (John 3) and the woman at the well (John 4). One was a man, the other a woman. One was rich and educated, the other poor and with no learning. One was a respected Jew, the other a despised Samaritan. One was religious and came seeking Jesus, although at night; the other, apparently uninter-

The pastor whose soul is consumed with a burning desire to see lost men and women saved, the pastor who has the faith to believe that large numbers of people in his community can be won for Christ, will see his church grow.

Mark A. Finley is director of the Lake Union Soul Winning Institute, Chicago, Illinois.

ested in religious matters, met Jesus accidentally at noonday.

Jesus approached Nicodemus with a direct spiritual appeal: "Ye must be born again." He approached the woman at the well through the avenue of social contact. He simply asked her for a drink of water. Matthew 9:35 describes Jesus' total approach to His world: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."

The broad variety of methods Jesus used and His concern with all dimensions of a person—physical, mental, and spiritual—drew the multitudes to Him in large numbers. Ellen White affirms this principle of a diversified approach to church growth in these words: "Some will be attracted by one phase of the gospel, and some by another. We are instructed by our Lord to work in such a way that all classes will be reached."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 327.

In each community there are levels of interest. The vast majority in any community may not be prepared currently to respond to a direct spiritual approach; therefore, the churches' approach to holistic ministry plugs into felt needs and moves people continually along the interest line. Yet the churches' chief responsibility is ministry to those in whom the Holy Spirit has already produced a receptivity. This group must consume the churches' major portion of time.

A holistic, diversified ministry naturally leads to the necessity for the next sign of church vitality.

Vital Sign No. 4: A well-thought-through, carefully organized and executed master plan. Recently I flew to Chicago from a church growth seminar in Maine with the vice-president of Anacosta Copper Company as my seatmate. As we flew together, we discussed the elements that contribute to success in any venture, whether church or business. He commented: "In our company, presidents and vice-presidents and the entire executive branch must submit five objectives for the coming year, as well as organized plans to meet those objectives."

In management, the goal or objective must be measurable. Thus a growing church, as a growing business, must develop measurable, attainable goals and careful, meticulous plans to reach those goals.

One of my current responsibilities is to foster growth in churches around the Lake Union Soul Winning Institute, of which I am director. Two years ago our school was responsible for planting a church in a new area of Chicago. At the end of 1980, that church had an active membership of approximately ninety. During the last few months of the year the church board met to

establish goals for the coming year. We developed three basic goals for 1981. Because we were meeting in a small, rented chapel, our first goal was to locate a new church site either by purchase, by plans to build, or by renting another facility. Our second goal was to increase our membership to 175 by the end of 1981, and the third goal was to involve 50 percent of our membership in some form of evangelistic outreach.

To accomplish these three goals, we established a building committee, which met regularly and located a new site. We have begun a series of outreach programs. Church membership is up to 105, and attendance is between 160 and 170 with chairs in the aisle of the small chapel. Third, the church has been divided into bands, witnessing classes are currently being taught, and we are well on our way to achieving the good of involving 50 percent of our membership. In three years our goal is to increase the membership to 250, to own our own building, and then to reach out in communities south of us to establish sister congregations.

To establish measurable goals, basic questions must be asked: What is our current membership? How have we grown during the past year? The past five years? Where do we want to be one year from now in terms of growth? What are our specific growth goals this year? Where do the priorities of the church lie?

Small churches (and most churches fall into this category) tend to stumble from crisis to crisis. Board meetings deal with such issues as: "How are we going to afford to fix the leaky plumbing for the toilet?" "What about the roof that is rotting away?" "How can we balance the church budget?" The wide range of problems goes on and on. Rather than focusing on the lost masses and planning to reach them, the church tends to become ingrown, self-centered. Creative planning is necessary to break out of this shell. Every member of the church should be instructed in a regular system of labor. Do you want your church to grow? Carefully define your plans. What do you want to accomplish in the last half of this year? In the first half of next year? Be specific. Meet with your church board. Get out your calendar. Define your programs. Plan for your programs and carefully execute them.

Do you want your church to grow? Establish a faith goal. Place the goal and sequential steps in logical order. Develop a time line for accomplishment. Assign committees. Follow up on that assignment and supervise implementation.

Vital Sign No. 5: Priority given to soul winning. Growing churches are those that desire to grow, that have a supreme passion for winning the lost. Growing churches are those that have clearly understood the mission of Christ stated in Luke 19:10: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." A growing church is one that clearly recognizes its mission of redemption, one that looks at the world through the rose-colored glasses of the cross of Christ and senses that men and women without Christ are lost and destined to eternal damnation. A church that clearly recognizes its mission of redemption in the community will thus carry out clearly defined plans.

Planning alone is like a car with no engine, a refrigerator that is not plugged in. It takes a living relationship with a loving Christ to feel His burden for souls. Luke describes Christ's attitude for the lost: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (verse 41). Growing churches come near to people and rub shoulders with them in the everyday activities of life. Growing churches sense that a world is lost. Growing churches have a deeper love for the lost than they do for their own petty problems; they sense that the great burden of Christ is the redemption of the lost.

Jesus is burdened for souls. He feels the pain of every cancer victim wasting away in the hospital. He experiences the sorrow of every woman whose husband has left her for someone else. He shares the grief of every mother whose child is born with a deformity. He experiences the horror of thousands of refugees in every war. In a way that you and I can never understand, Jesus bears the heartache, the sorrow, and the grief of the entire human race. Thus, for His people to be like Him and to bear His burdens means to reach out for the lost, to communicate the gospel of Christ, to see them saved ultimately in the kingdom of God.

A church with this vision and purpose will have all the vital signs of health and growth.

Growing churches come near to people and rub shoulders with them in the everyday activities of life. Growing churches have a deeper love for the lost than they do for their own petty problems.

The plan of salvation involves larger issues than we usually consider. In the cosmic struggle that has been going on between God and Satan since the beginning of this world, God's triumph is sure. But He must overcome in a manner that will forever demonstrate His righteousness.

Herbert E. Douglass

God on trial



And there was war in heaven" (Rev. 12:7)* How could this be? If God is all-powerful, who would dare contest His authority? If He is all-wise, how could He even appear to be inadequate or unfair?

But war there was, and "a third of the stars [angels] of heaven" (verse 4) rebelled under the chief rebel, "the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (verse 9). The insurgents "were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven" (verse 8).

Where did this vast entourage of disaffected angels go, this incredible league of the disgruntled? To a detention camp in a darkened corner of the universe, light-years away from all other created beings? No, God permitted them to test their theories wherever they could get a hearing. From the standpoint of this world's experience, the record says that they were "thrown down to the earth" (verse 9).

We are not left in darkness regarding how the conflict ends. John tells us that after millenniums of struggle, after Satan has done all he can to deceive the universe, there is heard "the mighty voice of a great multitude in heaven crying, 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power

belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just'" (Rev. 19:1, 2).

In this affirmation concluding the controversy lies a clue as to what the conflict was all about. We hear the echoes of Satan's charges: God has been unfair—He is severe and arbitrary. Apparently the great controversy ends only when God's creation is convinced that He is worth loving and deserving of trust.

From Genesis to Revelation the story of the controversy unfolds, describing how God defends Himself and settles the questions that deception has raised.

From one point of view, Christian theology is simply the story of who gets what, and why, out of the controversy. Thus theology may be described as the science of God's self-communication as it relates to the challenge of His antagonist. The Bible, then, is the theater wherein we observe (1) the antagonist at work stalking his victims, relentlessly subverting the government of the universe; and (2) the patient, gracious God telling His side of the matter.

The Revelator describes the antagonist as "the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (chap. 12:9), "that ancient serpent" (chap. 20:2). Jesus said that "he was a murderer from the beginning . . . a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Where did Satan come from? Bible

students from early Christian times have recognized in two Old Testament passages (Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28) inspired insights regarding his origin. Here the rebellion of Lucifer, "Day Star, son of Dawn" (Isa. 14:12), is described. He was created in "perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (Eze. 28:11); "you were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you" (verse 15).

The nature of this "iniquity" is depicted as a "proud" heart. The desire to be number one "corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor" (verse 17).

Insane as the idea is, Lucifer (Satan) "said in . . . [his] heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High'" (Isa. 14:13, 14).

By turning the allegiance of the angels to himself he usurped glory and authority that were God's. He especially coveted the place of that member of the Godhead we have come to know as Jesus the Christ. Covetousness, jealousy, deception, rebellion—it was all there, even in heaven. And his sinister charges, the lies, were not easily met. He lied about God, charging that God's law of love was not really in the best interests of created beings; that God, who demanded loyalty and obedience from others, Himself exercises no self-denial or sacrifice. Eventually Lucifer charged that God's law could not be obeyed and that God was the author of sin, suffering and death.

We see him at work in Eden (see Eze. 28:13). With great craft he raised doubt in Eve's mind. "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Gen. 3:1). Of course God had not said that (see chap. 2:17), but the breakdown of trust had begun. Eve overstated the truth, saying that God had forbidden them even to touch the tree (see chap. 3:3). The serpent plucked the fruit, demonstrated that no harm had come to him, and then leeringly offered the tantalizing fruit to Eve, who now relied more on her feelings and Satan's subtle reasonableness than upon the words of her Lord. Thus the rebellion begun in heaven was transferred

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to earth, and sin began on this planet.

How would God relate to rebellion? Would He forgive a rebel? How would He restore sinners who had been infected morally and depraved physically by their rebellion? How would He reinstate security to a questioning universe? By putting into effect what we have come to call the "plan of salvation," which, in terms of the great conflict, can be understood as how He has chosen to vindicate His maligned character and government before the watching universe.

Basic to this plan was the demonstration made by Jesus and His followers of what God is really like. John wrote that Jesus, "the Word" (John 1:1-3), was God and that He had come to reveal the truth about God: "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" (verse 14).

New Testament writers grasped the meaning of this wonderful incarnation: Into a world where God had been misrepresented and even hated, Jesus had come to make Him known and to correct the misrepresentations. "The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known" (verse 18). "He reflects the glory of God [His character] and bears the very stamp of his nature" (Heb. 1:3).

Why does the salvation of sinners and the security of the universe depend on a true picture of what God is like? Why does Jesus devote so much of His teaching ministry to explaining what God is like? Why is the truth about God—the good news about the kind of God who created the universe—so crucial to the Christian gospel?

Because knowing God—really knowing Him—is the strongest motivation to turn from sin and to trust Him above every earthly consideration or attraction (see John 17:3; Luke 10:27). Seeing Him in Jesus provides the incentive to be "changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18; cf. Gen. 1:27).

What *did* Jesus show us about God? Above all else, Jesus made it clear that God is our loving, waiting Father, who never shuts the door. In fact, God does more than wait at an open door; He seeks out His lost children (see Luke 15:3-24).

Jesus reveals that God is not angry at sinners nor in need of appeasement (see Luke 6:35; John 3:16, 17). He has taken the initiative in restoring fellowship with the rebels (see 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11). Through Christ, He "reconciled us to himself" (2 Cor. 5:18).

Jesus also revealed that without minimizing or overlooking sin, God found a way to preserve justice and still be able to promise eternal benefits to His followers. Through the life and death of Jesus, He proves "at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). The

universe learns that forgiveness is not cosmic whitewash, but recognition of a basic change in each converted rebel's life (see Matt. 3:8; 6:14, 15).

All this happens because, as our atoning Sacrifice, Example, and all-powerful Mediator, Jesus showed Satan's allegations to be lies. He revealed the truth about God's character, demonstrating that God *would* sacrifice Himself—even for rebels. God risked His own standing in the universe to show that sin is a moral issue, a relational problem. And He revealed sin's awful cost.

But questions remain: Though Jesus revealed what God was like (after all, He is God), though He announced that God was for sinners and thus did not need appeasing, though forgiveness was freely offered to all, how did all this "good news" solve, or begin to solve, the sin problem as it existed on Planet Earth?

How could it be proved that God was fair to ask sinners to obey His will (or law) and to judge them eventually on their response? (See Matthew 19:16-22; Rom. 6:12-19; 8:3, 4; 1 Cor. 15:34; Eccl. 12:13, 14.)

Did God place an impossible burden upon His followers when He exhorted them to walk even as Jesus walked? (See 1 John 2:6; cf. Eph. 5:1, 2; Phil. 2:1-5; 1 Peter 1:15, 16.)

Did God ask too much when He sought a people who would "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12; 12:17)?

The basic issue still is, Can God be trusted? Does His Word produce the results that He promises? Can we actually draw on the same power Jesus depended on to overcome sin (John 5:19; 15:5)? In the larger sense, can fallen beings be rescued from sin so decisively that by the grace of God they can be trusted to be loving, honest, gracious, compassionate people in whom the desire to sin—and thus the sinful act—will never arise again?

Paul's song in Ephesians sets forth God's redemptive purpose in bold lyrics; "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless. . . . He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ. . . . We who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory." "To me . . . this grace was given, to

preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. . . . That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 1:4-12; 3:8-19).

Paul grasped the Spirit's message: The church was destined to be the living exhibit of God's wisdom, the handiwork of His enabling grace, the convincing testimony that His ways are "true and just" (Rev. 19:2).

The great controversy is not an endless combat between light and darkness, between two cosmic forces locked in eternal conflict. When the issues have been settled, when the universe is convinced of God's benevolence, it will all be over.

The mission assigned to the church is to give God "glory" (see Rev. 14:7). The "eternal gospel" (Rev. 14:6) rightly understood is a "testimony to all nations" (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14:6) that God can be trusted, that His love is not so sentimental that it overlooks sin nor is His power so limited that only partial restoration is possible.

God is glorified when He is reflected in His handiwork. Polished sermons cannot, in themselves, reflect God. Buildings and activity do not necessarily give glory to God. Only people in whom "the life of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:5-7, 10, 11) is manifested can give glory to God and thus vindicate His government. Such is the purpose of salvation: "to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). Christ's love, graciousness, humility, endurance under stress and temptation, utter dependence on grace and holiness of life, are to be reflected in every Christian (cf. Heb. 5:7-9).

The controversy is settled only when God's people give glory to Him (Rev. 14:7)

As our atoning Sacrifice, Example, and all-powerful Mediator, Jesus showed Satan's allegations to be lies. He revealed the truth about God's character, demonstrating that God would sacrifice Himself—even for rebels.

in such a way that all mankind can make an intelligent decision as to whether God's program is something they want. Everyone must decide whether keeping "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12) is for them. The last-day vindication of God through His people is not a new feature in the great controversy scenario. God's purpose always has been to reveal His side of the story through His people—individually and collectively.

Ezekiel reminds us that God "needs" His people in proving Satan wrong even though God has so often been disappointed. "I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel cause to be profaned. . . . Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations . . . ; and the nations will know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes" (Eze. 36:21-23).

How does God plan to vindicate His name through His followers? How only can God be seen for what He truly is? Ezekiel continues: "You shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances" (verses 25-27).

Here we see the connection between the vindication of God and the new heart of the genuine Christian, clean from rebellion, made strong by God's Spirit, committed to and walking in obedience to God's law (see Rev. 12:17; 14:12).

In both Old and New Testaments the Bible uses the analogy of the vine (Isaiah 5, John 15) and the field of grain (Matthew 13, Mark 4) to depict the growth and eventual harvest of Christ-reflecting Christians. The gospel seed planted within the new Christian, often referred to as the new birth (John 3), will bear fruit like unto the parent plant. This nurturing work of the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to "walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" so that "the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8:4).

This fruit of the gospel seed (Gal. 5:22, 23), this maturation of Christian character, was the purpose of Christ's own earthly ministry. He anchored the plan of salvation forever in the union of law and love. "Made like his brethren in every respect" (Heb. 2:17), He provided the basis for the Christian's faith in His victory over sin. It was His way of glorifying the Father (see John 17:4). And it is ours: "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent

them into the world." "I in them and thou in me, . . . that the world may know that thou has sent me" (John 17:18, 23).

No, it isn't easy, this commission. It wasn't easy for Jesus, sinless Jesus: "in the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" (Heb. 5:7-9).

Malachi identifies the thinking of many who have wanted God's name but not His character: "You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, 'How have we wearied him?' By saying 'Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them.' Or by asking, 'Where is the God of justice?'" (Mal. 2:17).

Malachi goes on to point us to the time of the end and the final issues: "Who can endure the day of his coming and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord." "Then once more you shall distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and the one who does not serve him" (chap. 3:2, 3, 18).

Satan will contend fiercely (see Rev. 12:17) with that last generation who will "endure the day of his coming," because their testimony completes God's case against him. As the Lord prepares to thrust in His sickle and reap the ripe harvest (see Rev. 14:15, 16), Satan inspires events that cut off all forms of earthly support from those whom he has not conquered (see chap. 13:15-17). In full view of the hushed universe, the final scene of the great controversy is played out. On God's side, unwavering in their settled faith, their quiet endurance, are those who bear the seal of God—the approval of their Lord, who can endorse them as fully representing Him (see chap. 7:3). They bear "his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads." "In their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless" (chap. 14:1, 5; see Dan. 12:10). God's grace "is able to keep . . . [them] from falling and to present . . . [them] without blemish before the

presence of his glory with rejoicing" (Jude 24; cf. 2 Peter 3:11, 12, 14). Such people live out the truth that God can be trusted—that He is everything He says He is.

But there is another group: those filled with the same spirit of evil that has oppressed and killed God's people since the murder of Cain. The Bible symbolizes this group as serving the "beast and its image" (see Revelation 13, 14).

In a cosmic evaluation just prior to His return, while the two groups are becoming more distinctly separate, during the time of the ripening harvest, Jesus finishes His high-priestly function. Before the plagues fall (Revelation 16), before the resurrection of the redeemed (1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 20:4, 6), God declares who the redeemed shall be. He announces to all the universe who from earth are to be restored to the heavenly family (Rev. 22:11; Dan. 12:1).

Will the universe accept God's judgment regarding His "witnesses"? Daniel promised that the time would come when God and Satan would present their case before the universe in judgment (see Dan. 7:9-14, 26, 27; 8:14). He also foresaw that the "judgment was given for the saints of the Most High" (chap. 7:22).

God makes His case through His people. Not by coercion, but love; not by deception but, "by the open statement of the truth" (2 Cor. 4:2). God has demonstrated and vindicated His principles and methods of government. Never again will created beings anywhere in the universe question His character—and thus His law. In one accord, "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, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10, 11).

The chorus will echo from world to world: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just." . . . "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns, Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory" (Rev. 19:1-7). The rebellion is over!

* All Bible references, unless otherwise noted, are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1952, 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

Buildings and activity do not necessarily give glory to God. Only people in whom the life of Jesus is manifested can give glory to God and thus vindicate His government. Such is the purpose of salvation.

To the Puritan preachers of seventeenth-century England, all Scripture was for one purpose—to show men the incomparable Christ. To fail in communicating this would be to fail at the most crucial point of all, and no preacher worthy of his calling would be found wanting.

Bryan W. Ball

This incomparable Jesus

If every leaf, and spire of grass, . . . nay, all the stars, sands, and atoms, were in so many souls and seraphims, whose love should double in them every moment to all eternity, yet would it fall infinitely short of what His worth and excellency exacts. Suppose a creature composed of all the choice endowments that ever dwelt in the best of men since the creation of the world, in whom you find a meek Moses, a strong Samson, a faithful Jonathan, a beautiful Absalom, a rich and wise Solomon; nay, and add to this the understanding, strength, agility, splendour, and holiness of all the angels, it would all amount but to a dark shadow of this incomparable Jesus.” —John Flavel *Works* (1716) 1, p. 169.

Few Puritan preachers understood the redemptive purpose of Scripture more plainly, and few pressed the claims of Christ upon their people more persistently or more persuasively than John Flavel. The son of a Puritan minister who had died in prison for his refusal to conform to the prescribed religion of the day, Flavel knew well the price which might be required for pursuing the Puritan ideal of a thoroughly biblical faith. His writings, particularly the *Fountain of Life* and *Method of Grace*, are said to have influenced, among others, Jonathan Edwards, the early American theologian, George Whitefield, the eighteenth century preacher and theologian, and Archibald Alexander, the first professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. Whitefield ranked Flavel with John Bunyan and Matthew Henry, and Alexander is recorded to have declared, “To John Flavel I certainly owe more than to any uninspired author.” Flavel was one of the last in a long line of Puritan divines whose chief energies were spent in extolling the merits of Christ.

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Insistent as Puritanism was on a thorough understanding of Scripture, its real character can never be seen simply from that standpoint. . . . All that the Old Testament foretold of Christ in type and prophecy and all that Scripture in its entirety said of His humanity and divinity was, in the end, for one purpose. Men must come to understand the immense significance of the cross and of Christ's work as Redeemer. They must know why He had come and why He had died and in what way His life and death affected them. This was that knowledge which more than any other it was essential to have. To fail in communicating the meaning of these things would be to fail at the most crucial point of all, and no Puritan preacher worthy of his calling would be found wanting in that.

The death of Christ on the cross had been necessitated by sin. Of that basic truth there could not be the slightest doubt. “This is that deadly poison, so powerful . . . that one drop of it shed upon the root of mankind hath corrupted, spoiled, poisoned, and undone his whole race at once,” said Joseph Alleine, in *An*

Alarme to Unconverted Sinners (1673), p. 141, a work whose influence on the spiritual life of the age must be ranked with Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest* and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*. Since the cross could only be understood adequately from the standpoint of sin, it was essential to press home the awfulness of sin and its consequences. Alleine therefore continues, “This is the traitor that sucked the blood of the Son of God, that sold Him, that mocked Him, that scourged Him, that spit in His face, that pierced His side, that pressed His soul, that mangled His body, that never left till it had bound Him, condemned Him, nailed Him, crucified Him, and put Him to open shame.” —*Ibid.* But where is this “traitor,” this “butcher,” this “bloody executioner,” to be found? Is sin dead or alive? Is it merely an abstract principle outside human experience, at work at one given time in history to achieve the death of the Son of God? No, says Alleine, sin is inside human experience, it is ever-present in man, it is an inseparable part of human personality, and what it accomplished at the cross it accomplished through human beings and on behalf of all humanity. Therefore, says Alleine, “Study the nature of sin till thy heart be brought to fear and loath it.” —*Ibid.*, p. 142. The cross is God's way of dealing with the consequences of sin in human experience. “If He take them not away by the blood of His cross, they can never be taken away,” John Flavel says of man's sins, and “They will lie down with you in the dust, they will rise with you and follow you to judgement.” —*Works* 1, p. 49. The death of Jesus had been caused by sin and only in that context could it be understood.

How did seventeenth-century preachers understand, and how did they explain, the death of Christ? What did they comprehend by the terms “redemption” and “salvation”? Flavel poses a significant question in this respect when he asks, “Did Christ finish His work for us?” Was all that

is requisite for man's salvation accomplished on the cross? Christians of every generation who have thought about their faith have come, sooner or later, to this question. To Flavel, it was rhetorical and the answer follows immediately: "Then there can be no doubt, but that He will also finish His work in us. As He began the work of our redemption, and finished it, so He that hath begun the good work in you will also finish it in your souls." —*Ibid.*, p. 160. The conclusion Flavel reaches concerning the death of Christ is something of a paradox. Christ's work was effective, yet it was incomplete. It was finished in its accomplishment, yet unfinished in its application. The key to the paradox lies in Flavel's word "redemption", and in the relationship of this redemption to salvation as a process in time and in the individual. Redemption was accomplished and finished on the cross. Salvation was not complete until the work of the cross had been translated into human experience. Flavel explains further: "When we say Christ finished redemption-work by His death, the meaning is not that His death alone did finish it, for His abode in the grave, resurrection, and ascension, had all of them their joint influence into it." —*Ibid.*, p. 157. The argument was put clearly enough by John Durant in the introduction to *The Salvation of the Saints*. Durant, a leading minister among the Congregational Churches of Kent in the middle of the seventeenth century, expressed disappointment that many Christians were satisfied to accept the work accomplished on the cross, without obtaining a fuller knowledge of salvation. Durant's argument was that salvation depended on the total work of Christ and not merely on His death. While it was not to be disputed that His death lay at the heart of the matter, that it was the key to the mystery of salvation, yet it was not the sum total of Christ's work. Salvation had been "purchased" but not "completed" at the cross. There remained beyond the death of Christ "a great deal more to be done . . . to apply it unto us." —*The Salvation of the Saints by the Appearances of Christ* (1653), A7r. This meant in specific terms, Christ's priestly ministry in heaven and His coming again at the end of the age.

This desire to see the cross in perspective, to understand it in relationship to the rest of Christ's life and work, was not intended to minimise in the slightest the immense significance of His death. Flavel, whose thoughts on this matter are quite clear, and whose allegiance to sound Christology has already been demonstrated, was at pains to put beyond any possible doubt the completeness and centrality of the cross: "All that was to be done by way of impetration [achievement] and meritorious redemption, is fully done. No hand can come after His. Angels can add nothing to it. That is perfected to which nothing is wanting and to which nothing

can be added. Such is the work Christ finished. Whatever the law demanded is perfectly paid. Whatever a sinner needs is perfectly obtained, and purchased. Nothing can be added to what Christ hath done." —*Works* 1, pp. 158, 159.

The efficacy of Christ's monumental act on the cross is equally conveyed by Joseph Truman in his *Great Propitiation*, intended principally as an exposition of the doctrine of justification by faith, but warm throughout with the desire to make the historical act of the cross relevant to contemporary human need. "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him," says Truman, quoting Hebrews vii 25, and "No spot or stain is of so deep a dye that the blood of Christ cannot wash it out, no disease so desperate that He cannot cure it. . . . This red sea of Christ's blood is large enough, deep enough, to drown the tall Egyptian host of any sins." —*The Great Propitiation* (1669), p. 211. Redemption is therefore complete, and the blood of Christ powerful to cleanse and to save. Redemption leads onwards to full salvation, however, as Christ becomes a reality for the individual, and Flavel concludes, "as He presented a perfect sacrifice to God, and finished redemption work, so will He present every man perfect and complete, for whom He here offered up Himself." —*Works*, 1, p. 160. . . .

Space will permit examination of only two or three of the more salient concepts by which the meaning of Christ's death was explained by Puritan theologians. The first is the word "ransom." A ransom was the price to be paid in order that a hostage might be freed. Christ's death was a ransom, for it was in this connection that Christ became, in terms of Old Testament custom, the "Goel," the one who provided the required price. Man had sold himself and his inheritance into slavery, and was unable to redeem himself from bondage. When such a situation arose in Old Testament times, it was customary for a near kinsman to exercise the right of redemption. This was usually the elder brother on the mother's side, the heir to the family wealth. From his own resources he would provide the necessary ransom, thereby obtaining the release of the one in bondage. Such a benefactor was the "Goel." So with Christ. He, the elder Brother, the Heir of all things, had by the

gift of His life paid the price required, provided the way of release, and procured the assurance of new and eternal life.

It is equally true that Christ is more than the "Goel." He does not simply pay the required price, the ransom—He gives Himself. He does not only set the captive free, He takes the place of the guilty man and vicariously bears his punishment. Christ is man's substitute. Richard Sibbes comes to this point by recalling that Christ was the second Adam, and as such died a substitutionary death on behalf of all those whose right to life had been forfeited by the first Adam. "Christ died," he says, "as a public person, in whom dying all die." —*Christ's Exaltation*, p. 131. When men die in the ordinary course of events their death holds no meaning or significance beyond that which is common to every man. But with Jesus it is different. "Christ died alone and singular in this respect," says Sibbes, "Because in Him dying, all died that were His." —*Ibid.*, p. 132. Christ's voluntary death is the death which is required of all men as a consequence of sin. "You may sit under Christ's shadow with great delight, shaded from the heat of God's displeasure," says Joseph Truman, continuing, "He was scorched with God's wrath that we might be cooled, shaded, comforted, by that shadow that He hath made for wearied souls by being hanged on a tree." —*The Great Propitiation*, p. 209. In taking man's place Christ bears vicariously in His body the consequences of sin deserved by sinners themselves.

The ultimate consequence of Christ's death, both in terms of Scripture and in terms of Puritan theology, is reconciliation: "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His son," (Romans v 10). By sin man had been alienated from God, by the cross that alienation had been terminated. Man had broken the relationship. God had moved to restore it. Those who had been put at enmity by sin, were now, through the cross, placed in a new relationship. This is what is conveyed by the theological terms "reconciliation" and "atonement." Those who were estranged had been brought together, made "at one." This is fundamental Christian doctrine and none understood it better or proclaimed it with greater certainty than the Puritan preachers whose writings have been cited. Thomas Adams declared: "God sees all our violations of His law, knows every

Men must come to understand the immense significance of the cross and of Christ's work as Redeemer. They must know why He had come and why He had died and in what way His life and death affected them.

peccant act better than our own conscience, but, withall, He sees the atonement made in the sacrifice of His own Son, a satisfaction able to pay all our debts. Hence no sin shall oblige us to condemnation, no debt shall bear an action against us. The rich creditor sees many items in His books, knows what debts have been owing, but withall, He sees them crossed and cancelled."—*Works*, p. 1095. The atonement had been made. It is sufficient and satisfactory. The barrier of condemnation has been removed. God and man are brought together. John Flavel, lucid and concerned as ever, explains, "Reconciliation or atonement is nothing else but the making up of the ancient friendship betwixt God and man which sin had dissolved, and so to reduce these enemies into a state of sweet concord and sweet agreement." —*Works*, 1, p. 175. Baxter adds that the sufferings of Christ on the cross were "to bear what was due to the sinner, and to receive the blow that should have fallen upon him, and so to restore him to the life he lost and the happiness he fell from." —*Saints' Rest*, p. 73. If this introduces the idea of substitution, it also emphasizes the idea of restoration and reconciliation, the ultimate objective of Christ's redemptive work.

We return now to John Flavel. He seems not only to grasp the meaning of redemption, but almost to have the facility to feel within himself the dire consequences of sin, and the price of man's redemption. In a moving comment on the phrase "I come to thee" in the prayer of Jesus recorded in John xvii, Flavel says all that needs to be said by way of conclusion on the redemptive work of Christ: "There is much in these words, 'I come to thee'; I, thy beloved Son, in which thy soul delighteth; I, to whom thou never deniedest anything. 'Tis not a stranger, but a son, not an adopted, but thine only begotten Son. 'Tis I that come. I am now coming to thee apace, my Father. I come to thee swimming through a bloody ocean. I come treading every step of my way to thee in blood and unspeakable sufferings; and all this for the sake of those dear ones I now pray for." —*Works* 1, p. 88.

Did you enjoy this article?

If so, you'll want to read the book! This article was adapted from the second chapter of *The English Connection*, a recently released volume that explores the Puritan roots of such major Reformation doctrines as the authority of Scripture, salvation by grace and justification by faith, the perpetuity of the moral law, the world to come, and others. An editorial discussing this book's significance appears on page 22. We have arranged to offer this book to *MINISTRY* readers at a special price! For ordering information see page 30.

With careful consideration and earnest prayer, churches and pastors often have to make decisions that bring pain to people. How can we keep such necessary tasks from becoming routine and keep alive a sense of sorrow?

Arnold Kurtz

A day of mourning

Ministry is inevitably a series of painful decisions, often in the form of choices between the good of the institutional church and the need or comfort of the individual. Further, these choices are frequently the no-win variety between the lesser of two evils. Church boards and committees, conference committees and denominational councils, make so many decisions month by month, year by year—decisions that deeply affect the lives of many people, decisions that bring disruption and pain. Members are disciplined, disfellowshipped, denied church office. Pastors are removed from their pastorates, professors terminated from their positions.

Jim Kok, Chaplain at Pine Rest Christian Hospital, Grand Rapids, Michigan, has suggested that the church should establish an annual day of mourning—not just generalized mourning, but specific mourning by the church for the suffering, pain, and grief inflicted upon members by its decisions. He writes, "This would be a day when we would face the truth about ourselves and sorrow over how we have hurt people—in the name of Christ, and that we might have been in error when making decisions that affected people's lives."¹

Kok supports his call for mourning in church decision-making by citing an example: "Recently a school terminated the services of a young teacher because she had divorced her husband. This decision was devastating to the teacher and very upsetting to her students. No one will ever

know the permanent consequences for better or worse in their lives. The firing was done, I am told, out of consideration for the students. The conviction being, it appears, that accepting a divorced person as teacher is offering a negative role model for children and, I suppose, is considered an encouragement to divorce.

"I do not know the feelings of those who made this decision or the attitude surrounding it. However, I have some convictions about what they should have been. Let us put it in the form of a prayer:

"Lord, we have just decided on taking a lady out of her classroom, away from her students forever because she is divorced. We hurt for her as we do this. We cry for her pupils who will miss her. We ache because her colleagues will miss her too. We believe this is the right thing to do. We trust that You led us to this choice. We want to do what is right for the Christian community, for the school, for the lives of the children. But we can't do it without hurting people. People may even be turned away from You because of this. She, whose services we are terminating, will be injured deeply at a time when she needs support and encouragement from the Christian community. O Lord, we hate being put in this position; hurting people and even giving people reason to question You. But we do believe it is right. Nevertheless, Lord, in the corners of our hearts there is also the haunting fear that we could be wrong. As we understand things, we don't think so. But we could be wrong. And we beg Your forgiveness if out of the limitations of our human condition we have been mistaken. Accept our efforts, Lord. We hesitatingly present our decision and stand behind it. Heal, comfort, sustain those whom we've hurt in doing what we

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believe is Your will. . . . Support and encourage us who have to do this awful deed. Amen."²

Even if we could know for certain that our decisions were objectively right, should we not sorrow over the pain and disruption they bring to the lives of others?

Ministry requires deep human involvement. The pain of that involvement can be overwhelming, and it is only proper that the minister have some insulation, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of those to whom he ministers. Two concepts, pragmatically applied, could help provide the kind of objectivity needed: (1) the concept of the church as a human institution under God, and (2) the concept of ministry as a profession within that institution.

In the first place, while acknowledging the uniqueness of the church as a spiritual organism, the body of Christ, we must not deny its human side as an organization, "a sociological entity that has worship services, committees, women's groups, men's organizations, educational programs, youth groups, and problems."³ As a human society, the church must determine policy and have the necessary social power to act in the light of its decisions. In this sense the church is political, exhibiting "the patterns of relationships and action through which policy is determined and social power exercised."⁴ Every human organization contains political elements, and the church is no exception. Through a variety of means, we nominate, elect, control decisions, and exercise influence. Suggesting that church life has political elements does not mean that it is evil and to be avoided. To be human means to be political. But as Christians, sensitive to the brokenness of our human situation, we accept this aspect of our existence as standing always under the judgment of God.

This concept lays the groundwork for a second, that of the minister as a professional and his call to the ministerial office as a call to a profession. Such writers as James Glasse⁵ and David C. Jacobsen⁶ have developed this understanding at length. Especially does Jacobsen show its liberating value for decision-making in the church. The classic professions such as law and medicine, he argues, carry an implicit profession of faith in a person or concept. The medical doctor professes his faith in the healing arts and the tools and methods of that profession. Likewise, the lawyer, from a professional point of view, professes faith toward the State and its system of laws. He must have faith in the judges and the courts, and, with certain limitations, a faith in his fellow attorneys.

The clergyman is a professional also. According to Jacobsen, one might say, at first thought, that his profession of faith is to God. But as an ordained minister he

professes faith also in the visible church. Repeatedly, in his leadership role, he is called upon to express his faith in the visible body, the church, as a human institution under God. There are occasions when the growth and stability of the church as a human institution is the church leader's chief professional responsibility.

Of course, as a person, the minister is called to a deeper loyalty—to place his faith in God alone, but as a professional within the visible body he is called to have faith in that visible body. This does not mean that he may not have reservations about its present structure or effectiveness, but he does not doubt that it should exist. And he will work for its ongoing improvement. "He cannot be a cynic and sit in arrogant judgment over that church and still remain a professional."⁷

This concept of the ministry as a profession among other professions may be both "freedom-producing and anxiety-producing" in the face of tough decisions. It will be anxiety-producing when the growth and stability of the institution appear to be achieved at the expense of human values. For the sake of the many, some choices will have to be made to the detriment of the individual. If a pastor or denominational leader knows that those in his charge are not sufficiently mature or are "incapable of absorbing the impact of a decision that is too radically loving toward one person,"⁸ he may decide for the good of the institution. As a professional with a commitment to the visible institution, he must be able to do so with "calculated and educated calm" rather than collapsing in pain. But for the minister to make every choice indiscriminately in deference to the many would be to abandon his pastoral responsibility.

Of all the dilemmas confronting the minister, Jacobsen reminds us, this is the most critical. Illustration: the valued associate of a pastor has offended the neurotic wife of a leading elder. All efforts at reconciliation have failed. The pastor and his church are faced with the decision of either offending a family of longstanding influence or losing the services of a much-appreciated and broadly supported staff member. Whatever the choice, the pastor cannot avoid the decision or the hurt that will result. As a professional, he

realizes that the church should respond as the body of Christ with love for all the parties. He recognizes that it is also a human institution that may not respond in love but in defensiveness and self-preservation.

If, after careful study, he concludes that the benefits and costs are weighted in favor of a choice for the many, he must support that choice, though it be with pain. Jacobsen argues: "The minister is called to a task that is essential to the institution. He is called to be a competent professional and not a sentimental perfectionist. He must be sensitive to need and the group dynamic that cuts across the visible body to the injury of some. But the sensitivity ought not to paralyze him."⁹

In one way or another, with or without the minister, tough decisions are made, often cutting and hurting those involved. Even though made prayerfully, these decisions can be made only with a sense of sorrow and humility. We must always be aware of our limited vision and distorted perceptions, our biases, prejudices, and self-deception.

An annual Day of Mourning in the church! A Day of Mourning for the decisions we are compelled to make! It would have to be a day when we lay aside our defensiveness, our reasons, and our rationalizations. It should be a day when we are stripped to the naked truth that in spite of earnest prayer and careful consideration, "in our weakness and mortality and finitude and limitations as human beings, we know we have hurt, damaged, and even led people astray while doing what we thought was right, fair, just, and faithful"¹⁰ to the will of God.

¹ Jim Kok, *The Chaplains Newsletter*, vol. 12, No. 2.

² *Ibid.*

³ Robert Worley, *Change in the Church: A Source of Hope* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), p. 15.

⁴ James Gustafson, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1961), p. 100.

⁵ James Glasse, *Profession: Minister* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1968).

⁶ David C. Jacobsen, *The Positive Use of the Minister's Role* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁰ Kok, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Ministry requires deep human involvement. The pain of that involvement can be overwhelming, and it is only proper that the minister have some insulation, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of those to whom he ministers.

The seventy-week prophecy of Daniel 9 is recognized as very important by dispensationalists and nondispensationalists alike. The question: Do the seventy weeks form an unbreakable unit predicting the time of the Messiah's first advent and details of His work? Or should the final week be separated from the rest and applied to antichrist's work at the end of the world's history? Those who insert a gap of centuries between the final week and preceding ones admit their dissection is "startling." It is also scripturally unwarranted, says the author.

Hans K. LaRondelle

Christ or antichrist: The mysterious gap in Daniel 9

Despite major differences in interpretation, both dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists agree on one point regarding the seventy-weeks prophecy of Daniel 9—its importance. Says dispensationalist Alva J. McClain, "Probably no single prophetic utterance is more crucial in the fields of Biblical interpretation, Apologetics, and Eschatology."¹ One of the most telling Messianic prophecies in the whole Bible, Daniel 9:24-27, is also considered by some to be "one of the most difficult in all the Old Testament."² This may be one reason for the divergence of interpretation regarding it.

The book of Daniel testifies to the divine inspiration of the Hebrew Bible and of predictive prophecy in particular. A reckoning of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 as 490 years leads irrevocably to the conclusion that the promised Messiah of Israel had already appeared *before* the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It is understandable that the Talmud places a curse on those who attempt to compute the seventy weeks of Daniel.³

Christ's specific admonition to His

apostles to understand "'the prophet Daniel' when they would see the predicted "'abomination that causes desolation'" "'standing in the holy place'" (Matt. 24:15)* is also of prime importance to the idea of the divine inspiration of predictive prophecy in Scripture. There can be no doubt that Christ applied the desolating abomination of Daniel 9:27 not to the past outrages of Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. (as 1 Macc. 1:54 ff. does) but to His own immediate future when the Roman army would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple in His own generation (see Luke 21:20-24). Jesus' contemporary application of Daniel 9:26, 27 was confirmed in A.D. 70 when the Roman armies under General Titus placed their idolatrous ensigns as an "abomination" in Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.⁴ The position of Lewis F. Hartman that "the quasi-prophecy of Daniel 9:26" refers exclusively "to the climax of Epiphanes' persecution of the Jews, when he abolished the legitimate sacrifices of Yahweh in the Temple of Jerusalem and set up on its altar the statue of Zeus Olympios,"⁵ is answered by Joyce G. Baldwin: "Commentators who argue that Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled this prophecy are at a loss to account for the fact that he destroyed neither the Temple nor the city of Jerusalem [as

required by Daniel 9:26]."⁶ Thus Christ applied the seventy-weeks prophecy of the coming Messiah and the subsequent devastations of Messiah's enemy to His own time and neither to the past nor to the indefinite future. Christ related the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to Israel's final refusal to accept Him as her King and Saviour (see Matt. 21:33-43; 23:37, 38; Luke 19:41-44). This relationship between the coming of the Messiah and the destruction of both city and sanctuary is the crucial message of Daniel 9:26, 27. The seventy-weeks prophecy is basically a Messianic prophecy announcing the consequences of Jerusalem's rejection of her Messiah.

An unbreakable unity

"Seventy 'sevens'" were decreed, or determined, by God as a renewed probationary period for Jerusalem and the Jewish people after the seventy years of the Babylonian exile had terminated (see Dan. 9:24). There can be no doubt about the duration of this period: seventy times

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seven "years," or 490 years (see R.S.V.). No day-for-a-year symbolism needs to be supposed here because Gabriel uses no symbols in his detailed chronological explanation. G.F. Hasel observes, "There is virtually unanimous agreement among interpreters of all schools of thought that the phrase 'seventy weeks' or literally 'sevens seventy' . . . means 490 years."⁷

Gabriel explained to Daniel that the history of Israel within this 490-year span would develop in three distinct phases—one of seven weeks, a second of sixty-two weeks, and a third of one week (see verses 25 and 27). However, nowhere does the angel imply a gap between any of these three phases. To suggest an indeterminate time interval between the seven and sixty-two weeks, or between the sixty-two and the one last week is an unnatural assumption that militates against the expressed unit and goal of the seventy weeks (see verse 24).

The normal, natural exegetical assumption is that the seventy consecutive weeks are an unbreakable unity. They are presented as a unit, just as are the seventy years of Babylonian exile in Daniel 9:2. Edward J. Young concludes, "If there is no warrant for inserting a gap in Jeremiah's prophecy, what warrant is there for doing so in the prophecy of the seventy sevens? Had there been a gap in Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 25:10) Daniel could never have understood the years of the captivity."⁸ "Never," concludes Philip Mauro, "has a specific number of time-units, making up a described stretch of time, been taken to mean anything but continuous or consecutive time-units."⁹ Because the other predicted time periods are consecutive, the natural expectation can only be that the seventy weeks of Daniel are also consecutive.

J. F. Walvoord, however, draws a parallel between the Old Testament Messianic prophecies and the time prophecies in Daniel in order to support the idea of a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week of Daniel 9. But the fact that the Old Testament prophets customarily fuse together the first and second advents of Christ in their Messianic prophecies without considering the interval between the two (Isa. 9:6; 61:1, 2; Zech. 9:9, 10) gives us no right to create a gap between the specific time periods in Daniel 9. The chronological unit of the seventy weeks is not "parallel" to the nonchronological Messianic promises, in spite of Walvoord's assertion.¹⁰ The regular Messianic promises do not always intend to present the proper historical order of the two advents of Christ and even sometimes reverse the order (see Gen. 3:15; Zech. 9:9). Such examples can never serve as an argument to create a gap between Daniel's sixty-ninth and seventieth prophetic week. E. Hengstenberg represents the classical church interpretation: "The period of 70 hebdomads, or 490 years, is here predicted

as one that will continue uninterruptedly from its commencement to its close. . . . What can be more evident than this? Exactly 70 weeks in all are to elapse; and how can anyone imagine that there is an interval between the 69 and the 1 week, when these together make up the 70?"¹¹

The dispensationalist break in the unit of the seventy weeks destroys the very point in specifying seventy consecutive weeks.

Reasons for dissecting

It is "of major importance" to dispensationalism, according to Walvoord,¹² to separate the last week from the total unit of seventy weeks and project it into the indefinite future. Acknowledging that this "startling" dissection needs some good reason, McClain asks, "How can such a method be justified?"¹³ He offers briefly five reasons.

First, Daniel's expression "'After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off'" (chap. 9:26) indicates that the death of the Messiah must take place *before* the seventieth week. It also occurs *after* the sixty-two weeks; consequently it must fall *between* the sixty-ninth and seventieth week! Only after the death of Christ and after the (next mentioned) destruction of Jerusalem (verse 26) do we come to the final one week in verse 27.

This literalistic reading of verses 26 and 27 is determined by the idea that Daniel necessarily presents a strictly chronological sequence in these two passages. This assumption is accepted as a self-evident axiom. J. F. Walvoord states: "The anointed one, or the Messiah, is cut off after the sixty-ninth week, but not in the seventieth."¹⁴ However, this last phrase, "but not in the seventieth," appears nowhere in Daniel 9:26, 27; it is Walvoord's unwarranted assumption.

This presupposition has been severely criticized both from the standpoint of literary analysis and of theological exegesis.¹⁵ When it announced that seventy weeks are determined for national Israel and that the Messiah will be "cut off" *after* the first sixty-nine weeks, the natural presumption can only be that the death of the Messiah will take place some time *during the last week*. J. Barton Payne concludes, "What could be more naturally assumed than that it [the cutting off of the Messiah] concerns the 70th week?"¹⁶

McClain's second argument is, "In the

record of the prophecy, the destruction of the city [verse 26] is placed *before* the last week [verse 27]."¹⁷ Therefore, the events of the seventieth week cannot occur prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. For this reason dispensationalism sees verse 27 as a prediction about another enemy of God, the end-time antichrist, who would suddenly rise more than nineteen centuries after the death of Christ and after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

This argument is valid only on the assumption that verses 26 and 27 are phrased in a modern style of prose that describes events in strictly chronological order. But recent studies (see note 15) have made it clear that dispensationalism's literalistic reading fails to recognize the Hebrew poetic style of "repetition with elaboration" in Daniel 9:24-27, which J. B. Payne calls a "revelational pattern."¹⁸ This stylistic pattern appears also in verses 24 and 25. Payne argues that "Daniel 9:25, 26 cannot be taken as subsequent to 9:24; instead verses 25, 26 pick up [repeat and elaborate] the summary of the entire seventy weeks given in verse 24." This seems quite obvious, but no more so than the relation of verse 27 to verse 26. Payne remarks: "That verse 27 thus repeats verse 26 is recognized by interpreters of every stamp and is confirmed by the verbal correspondences that appear, particularly in the last parts of the respective verses."¹⁹

With this recognition, we see the atoning death of Christ Jesus again mentioned in verse 27 and now more precisely located "in the middle" of the last prophetic week, not in an unmentioned gap. Verses 26 and 27 relate to each other according to the structure: Messiah-Roman Destroyer (verse 26), Messiah-Roman Desolator (verse 27). In short: A/B (verse 26); A/B (verse 27).

This simple poetic style of Hebrew parallelism in verses 26 and 27 (which is also the poetic arrangement in verse 25)²⁰ is the most thorough reply of grammatical exegesis to literalism's interpretation of a dissecting gap.

The question remains, But did not the destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary (verse 26) occur in A.D. 70, almost forty years after the death of Christ and thus outside the seventy weeks of years? This objection would be valid if the destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary was mentioned in verse 24 as one of the six predicted goals of the seventy-weeks

The relationship between the coming of the Messiah and the destruction of both city and sanctuary is the crucial message. The prophecy is basically an announcement of the consequences of Jerusalem's rejection of her Messiah.

prophecy. This is not so. The time of the Messiah's anointing and of His atoning death are precisely predicted to occur within the 490 years, but not the time of Jerusalem's destruction. This divine judgment was therefore open to forty years of delay after the cross of Christ, so that many thousands of Jews could hear the meaning of the cross of Christ and through faith and repentance be saved.

McClain's third reason is, "The fulfillment of the tremendous events in verse 24 cannot be found anywhere in known history".²¹ He means: In the Jewish people no end of sinning and no beginning of everlasting righteousness can be noticed; no atonement for wickedness, no sealing up of vision and prophecy, no anointing of a most holy thing. But such an observation is rejected by most conservative Bible interpreters as missing the mark. Verse 24 must be understood as being accomplished by the Anointed One Himself on behalf of Israel (verses 25-27). Christ's death and resurrection to a new priesthood accomplished a perfect atonement for Israel's sin and provided an everlasting righteousness for Israel. The true Israel did enter into the benefits of His sacrificial death and are therefore clothed with the white garments of His righteousness. Christ's baptism (His anointing by the Spirit) and death authenticated Daniel's prophetic vision; His ascension to heaven meant the consecration of a new high-priesthood²² in the sanctuary of heaven that was manifested on earth in the outpouring of the anointing Spirit of God on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:33; Heb. 7:12, 22; 8:1, 2; 9:23, 24). Thus E. J. Young declares of Daniel 9:24-27, "The passage is Messianic through and through."²³ And Joyce G. Baldwin concludes her exegesis in these words: "The first coming of Christ is the focal point of the forward look, though the second coming in judgment is also envisaged."²⁴ This view does justice to both aspects of the Messianic prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27—the central focus on the Messiah's coming to fulfill the sixfold goal of verse 24, and the final judgment of God poured out on the desolator at "the end" (verse 27). Dispensationalism categorically denies that Christ's first advent (His baptism, His death, and resurrection) fulfilled any or all of the six goals of this magnificent Messianic prophecy.

McClain's fourth reason for a gap interpretation is the argument from analogy with the nonchronological Messianic prophecies that has been discussed above.

His fifth argument: "The testimony of our Lord Himself shows that the Seventieth Week is still future."²⁵ McClain bases this statement on the assumption that the future desolator spoken of in the second part of verse 27 is the same power referred to earlier in the verse as putting an end to sacrifice and offering "in the middle," of the seventieth week. Thus he argues that while Daniel placed the "abomination of

desolation" (K.J.V.) exactly in the middle of the last week, in Matthew 24:15, 21, 29, 30 "our Lord placed it at 'the end,' just before His second coming in glory." He concludes: "Therefore, the Seventieth Week must also come at the end of the present age just prior to Christ's coming in glory. This is the interpretation of Christ Himself, and it should settle the matter."²⁶

McClain reaches this conclusion on the basis of several unwarranted presuppositions. The first error is the failure to recognize the style of Hebrew parallelism in verses 26 and 27, whereby it becomes clear that verse 27 speaks more elaborately about the same two powers—the Messiah and His opponent—as does verse 26. Not the antichrist but the Messiah Himself is predicted to end the sacrificial system in the middle of the seventieth week, exactly three and one-half years after His baptism as the Anointed One. The Gospel of John verifies the precise historical fulfillment of this prophecy in Christ's life; the time between His baptism and cross was exactly three and one-half years.²⁷

Did Christ end sacrifice?

McClain insists that "the death of Christ did not cause the Jewish sacrifices to cease. They continued, in fact, until the destruction of Jerusalem nearly forty years later. . . . The sacrifices should have ceased immediately. But they did not."²⁸

This reasoning reckons only with a human point of view. From God's point of view, as recorded in the New Testament, Daniel's description discloses one of the most profound and decisive revelations of the Messiah's mission, the very goal of the seventy-weeks prophecy, God's method of fulfilling the sixfold goal of Daniel 9:24. The abolishing of the whole Levitical priesthood and sacrificial shadow service was already announced in Psalm 110:1, 4, an earlier Messianic prophecy. Here David had declared that the future Messianic Ruler would also be "a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

The New Testament presses this challenging question: "If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law" (Heb. 7:11, 12).

Only the Messiah Himself could legitimately abolish once and forever the system of symbols that pointed forward to the atoning self-sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God. "He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself" (verse 27). "But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . . Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people" (chap. 9:26-28). "He sets aside the first [sacrifices and offerings] to establish the second [the will of God]" (chap. 10:9).

There can never be a valid return to the old covenant and its earthly temple worship, after Christ, the Antitype, has terminated once for all the "shadow" and inaugurated a "better covenant" that offers His righteousness as the everlasting righteousness (see Heb. 7:22; cf. chap. 10:12; Rom. 3:22, 25). "By calling this covenant [with its heavenly sanctuary and heavenly High Priest] 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear" (Heb. 8:13). Christ confirmed God's covenant with Israel when He instituted the Lord's Supper the night before His death. Taking the cup, He declared, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Thus Christ confirmed God's covenant with many in Israel for one week (seven years): three and one-half years before His death by His own ministry and three and one-half years by that of His apostles in Jerusalem.²⁹

The fulfillment of Daniel's prediction that "'in the middle of that 'seven' he [the Anointed One of chap. 9:25, 26] will put an end to sacrifice and offering'" (chap. 9:27), was strikingly confirmed by an act of God Himself. When Jesus died, "at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matt. 27:51; cf. Mark 15:38). The death of Christ signified the end of Israel's sacrificial temple ritual by an unmistakable act from heaven. The legitimacy of the temple sacrifices had come to their end before God. The Jews as a whole did not accept this divine decision and immediately re-instituted their bloody sacrifices. But the Shekinah glory had now departed from their temple, and it was therefore no longer the temple of God, and Jerusalem was no longer the holy city. Instead of God's blessing, now His curse rested on

Dispensationalism categorically denies that Christ's first advent (His baptism, His death and resurrection) fulfilled any or all of the six goals of this magnificent Messianic prophecy.

their house ("your house," Matt. 23:38; cf. 1 Thess. 2:16). Total destruction by the Roman armies would soon follow. "They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you" (Luke 19:44; cf. chap. 21:20-24). This fatal consequence of Israel's avowed rejection of the real mission of the Messiah—the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70—was also part and parcel of Daniel's prophecy. Christ explained: "For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written" (chap. 21:22).

We agree therefore with the view of G. F. Hasel: "Although with the death of Jesus Christ the Jewish sacrifices did not cease, the sacrifices offered after His death could no longer be regarded as legitimate and valid in God's sight (Heb. 7:11; 8:13; 9:25, 26; 10:8, 9)." ³⁰

Christ the Anointed One

McClain further challenges the Messianic interpretation of Daniel 9:26 by stating, "They cannot point to the place in history where it [the Messiah's covenant with Israel] began nor where it ended." ³¹ This leads us to consider the significance of Daniel's repeated title of "Anointed One" for Israel's Redeemer.

The first sixty-nine weeks of years were to reach "until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes" (chap. 9:25). This is one of the most explicit Messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Bible. The Messiah is designated by the double characteristic of *Anointed One* and *Ruler*, identifying Him as the royal Messiah or Priest-King (cf. Isa. 61:1-3; Zech. 6:13; Ps. 110:4). Dispensationalists regularly neglect Daniel's emphasis on the coming Prince as the *Anointed One* (chap. 9:25, 26) and select the term "ruler" (verse 25) as the exclusive focus of this time prophecy. McClain pinpoints April 6, A.D. 32, as the time when Jesus "offered Himself as the Prince and King of Israel" at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, just a few days before His crucifixion. ³² The fact is, however, that Jesus was not "anointed" at that time!

The real question is, When did Jesus offer Himself as the *Anointed One*? The New Testament replies with unmistakable clarity that "'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power'" (Acts 10:38) and proclaimed this Anointed One to be His Son or King (see Mark 1:9-11; cf. Ps. 2:6, 7) on the day of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. Luke, the historian, dates Christ's baptism "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (chap. 3:1; see verses 2, 3, 21), apparently the only event in Christ's life that is historically dated in the New Testament. Jesus' own testimony in the synagogue at Nazareth, shortly after His baptism, confirms this conclusion. He read the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me," and then commented,

"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:16, 21). Thus Christ offered Himself to Israel as the "Anointed One," the Messiah, immediately after His baptism three and one-half years before His crucifixion. In contrast, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was clearly intended to draw the attention of Israel and the world to the redemptive significance of His impending crucifixion on behalf of all men.

Right after His baptism, however, Christ announced to Israel, "The time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:15, K.J.V.). We agree, therefore, with J. Barton Payne's conclusion: "Here [at Christ's baptism] arises a Messianic consummation that did find fulfillment in history and that does fit the chronology [of Dan. 9:25]." ³³ It needs to be stressed, however, that Jesus became the predicted Messiah at His baptism only in order to fulfill the sixfold divine mission described in Daniel 9:24, a goal that was accomplished basically in His atoning death on the cross exactly three and one-half years later. This was, of course, "the middle" of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:27. On the cross, just before He died, Christ exclaimed in triumph to the Father, "It is finished" (John 19:30). His mission, as described in Daniel 9:24, was completed.

Since the goal of the seventy-weeks prophecy is so intensely Messianic, "the principal emphasis is not upon the beginning and ending of this remarkable period but upon the mighty events which were to transpire therein, events which have wrought our peace with God." ³⁴

¹ A. J. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1940), p. 9.

² E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 191.

³ *Sanhedrin* 97b (Soncino ed.), p. 659.

⁴ See G. R. Beasley-Murray, in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, C. Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 74, 75. F. F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1973), p. 224, refers to the "Roman custom of offering sacrifice to their standards."

⁵ *The Book of Daniel*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 23 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1978), p. 252.

⁶ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), p. 171; see also p. 174. Cf. G. McCready Price, *The Greatest of the Prophets* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1955), p. 244, who points further to Matthew 22:7.

⁷ "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24-27" (Insert D, *Ministry*, May, 1976), p. 5. Two contextual observations corroborate this conclusion: (1) Daniel was thinking about time in terms of years only (chap. 9:2); (2) In chapter 10:2 Daniel adds to this expression "three weeks" the words "of days" (in Hebrew) to distinguish these three weeks as ordinary weeks, in apparent contrast with the year-weeks of chapter 9.

⁸ Young, *op. cit.* p. 216.

⁹ Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* (Boston: Hamilton Bros., 1923), p. 95. He refers to the predicted 430 years for Israel in Genesis 13 and Galatians 3:17; the 7 years of plenty and the 7 years of famine for Egypt in Genesis 45:6; the 40 years for Israel in Numbers 14:34; and Jesus' resurrection within three days.

¹⁰ J. F. Walvoord, *The Return of the Lord* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), p. 77.

¹¹ E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956), Vol. III, p. 143.

¹² J. F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), p. 24.

¹³ McClain, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁴ Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, p. 25.

¹⁵ The hermeneutical importance of the literary structure, with its poetic forms of parallelism and chiasm in Daniel 9:24-27, is brought to light in three valuable studies: J. Doukhan, "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9: An Exegetical Study," *AUSS* 17 (Spring, 1979), pp. 1-22; B. H. Shea, "Poetic Relations of Time Periods in Daniel 9:25," *AUSS* 18/1 (1980), pp. 59-63; J. B. Payne, "The Goal of Daniel's Seventy Weeks," *Journal of the Evangelical Theol. Soc. (JETS)* 21/2 (June, 1978), pp. 97-115.

¹⁶ *JETS* 21/2 (June, 1978), p. 109.

¹⁷ McClain, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

¹⁸ *JETS* 21/2 (June, 1978), p. 109.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; see especially Doukhan, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-14.

²⁰ See B. H. Shea, *loc. cit.*

²¹ McClain, *loc. cit.*

²² See Doukhan, *loc. cit.*, especially p. 12. *AUSS*.

²³ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

²⁵ McClain, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁷ See *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, "Chronology of the Gospel of John," pp. 192, 193, 229-231; J. B. Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 387.

²⁸ McClain, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²⁹ See J. B. Payne, *JETS* 21/2 (June, 1978), p. 109; also his *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, p. 388.

³⁰ *Ministry*, Insert D, May, 1976, p. 17.

³¹ McClain, *loc. cit.*

³² McClain, *op. cit.*, p. 26. This date is arrived at by a complicated transformation of lunar years into solar years, which is rejected as incorrect in details by other dispensational writers. See G. F. Hasel (note 2).

³³ "The Goal of Daniel's Seventy Weeks," *JETS* 21/2 (June, 1978), p. 101. Payne reckons the 69 weeks or 483 years from Artaxerxes' decree to Ezra in 458 B.C. till Christ's baptism in the fall of A.D. 26. Seventh-day Adventists prefer the dates 457 B.C. till A.D. 27 as more accurate; see G. F. Hasel (note 2).

³⁴ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

Not the antichrist but the Messiah Himself is predicted to end the sacrificial system in the middle of the seventieth week, exactly three and one-half years after His baptism as the Anointed One.

Endless hours have been spent discussing the mysteries involved in the Incarnation. Almost everyone believes that Jesus was, and is, God. But what about His human nature? How much of a man was He? Was He just like us or not? Our answer seems to depend on how we understand the nature of sin and Jesus' relationship to it.

Morris L. Venden

What Jesus said about Himself



If one subject has distinguished itself among theologians as being particularly difficult and divisive, it's the subject of the nature of Christ. Sometimes we waste endless hours on it, and end up further from agreement than before we began! But when we talk about Jesus and who He was, it becomes very fascinating to discover what He said about it, and what the Gospel writers said about it. After all, He really should be the final authority on the subject, should He not?

There probably isn't any evangelical, fundamental, Bible-believing Christian who doesn't believe that Jesus was God, that Jesus is God. But notice a few of the major scriptures on the subject: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). At the baptism of Jesus God Himself spoke: "This is my

beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

Even the devils knew who He was. The devil came and tried to tempt Jesus to turn stones into bread (see chapter 4). If he hadn't known Jesus was God, that would have been a ridiculous temptation. None of us has ever been tempted on that one! And not only the devil himself but all of his demon followers knew who Jesus was. On more than one occasion they said, "We know who you are, the Holy One of God" (see Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34, 41).

Jesus said, "I have power to lay . . . [My life] down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). Not one of us could make that claim. Jesus was talking as God. He gave evidence that He had power to forgive sins, and the people charged Him with blasphemy (see Luke 5:20, 21). Once again, Jesus was speaking as God.

John 13:3 tells us that Jesus knew that He came from God, that He was God. In the Temple at the age of 12 when He said, "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49), He gave evidence for the first time that He knew He was the one sent from heaven. And at His trial, when the high priest asked Him under oath whether He was the Son of God, He said, "I am" (Mark 14:61, 62).

So Jesus was God. He continued to be God when He became man. And He continues to be God, at the right hand of the Father today.

Having said that, let's proceed to the second main topic under this theme—Jesus was also man. He was human. "The Word [or Jesus] was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

As a man, Jesus exhibited certain traits common to human beings. He got tired, and went to sleep in the bottom of a boat (see chap. 4:6; Mark 4:37, 38). He got

hungry and thirsty; He was thirsty on the cross (see John 4:7, 8; 19:28). He found out, as a man, what it is like to experience the needs and necessities that we experience.

But right here is where the subject of the nature of Christ begins to get a little sticky, where the dialogue and the discussions come in. How much of a man was He? How human was He? Was He *just* as we are, or was He not?

Jesus became a man after thousands of years of downhill degeneration by the human race. At the time of Adam, men lived hundreds of years. Not so at the time of Jesus. Jesus had less physical vitality than Adam would have had. Jesus got tired when Adam probably wouldn't have. In fact, in the story of the woman at the well (chapter 4), Jesus was apparently more tired than His disciples were! Since Adam, the human race had been decreasing in physical strength, mental power, and moral backbone. Jesus accepted the weakness of humanity; the power we see manifested in His life was the power of His Father. If Jesus had come to earth as a human during the first hundred years after the Fall of man, it seems He would have had a much easier time of it, humanly speaking.

We also know this concerning Jesus—He was never a sinner. He said it of Himself, "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (chap. 8:29). "Which of you convinceth me of sin" (verse 46)? And long before His birth, the angel had said to Mary, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Jesus was sinless. He was called "that holy thing," and no other person born into this world was ever described in that way. So right here we see

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a point in which Jesus was born differently than we are. He was never a sinner; He never sinned; He was sinless.

Sometimes we get into discussions of whether Jesus' human nature was like that of Adam before the Fall or like that of Adam after the Fall. Such discussions can keep you going until midnight! But in a sense, it's like asking someone whether he wants peanut butter or jelly with his bread, and he answers Yes. There is a sense in which Jesus was like Adam before the Fall and a sense in which He was like Adam after the Fall. Both are true. Jesus was like Adam *after the Fall* in that He accepted the workings of the law of heredity and became a human being subject to the limitations of human beings of His time. But He was like Adam before the Fall in that He was sinless.

When Jesus took the liabilities of fallen man, there was one that He did not take—man's *sinful* nature. He had a spiritual nature from birth that carried with it no propensities to sin. Jesus had no desire for sin. Can you say that about yourself? Could you ever say that about any other person born into this world of sin? But it was said of Jesus that He loved righteousness and hated iniquity (see Heb. 1:9).

All of this leads us to a very practical question: Did Jesus have some sort of advantage over us? Yes, He had an advantage over us. He was born "that holy thing." We weren't. Jesus never sinned; therefore, He was never tempted to *continue in sin*, something that I suggest is one of our greatest temptations. Jesus never had that. From the time He was a child, He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. That cannot be said about us. So He did have advantages.

But Jesus lived His earthly life through dependence upon His heavenly Father. Therefore He did not use the advantages that He had. He lived life in exactly the same way in which He invites us to live—through dependence upon a higher power. He tells us, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). But He also said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (chap. 5:30). Even His mighty miracles were wrought through the power of God, rather than from His own inherent divine power (see Acts 2:22). In the wilderness of temptation, an angel came to strengthen Jesus and minister to His needs. He did not use His divine power to meet His own necessities, in spite of the devil's temptation for Him to do that very thing (see Matt. 4:11). Again, in the Garden of Gethsemane an angel came to strengthen Him (see Luke 22:43). It was an angel messenger from His Father's throne who encouraged Him, and brought Him power to face the cross.

When we come to the cross, we see Jesus struggling under the weight of the sins and guilt of the whole world, and crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

me" (Matt. 27:46)? And we wonder whether He is finally on His own. But no, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). God was still there, even though Jesus could not see Him. The presence of God was manifest by the supernatural darkness that came at about the ninth hour, by the earthquake, and by the rending of the Temple veil when Jesus finally died.

So all through His life—His perfect, sinless behavior; His miracles; Gethsemane and the cross—Jesus lived through a power from above Him. It was always through the *faith* relationship of prayer, communication, and fellowship that Jesus experienced this power.

Thus Jesus becomes our example. He says so in connection with the Lord's Supper. "I have given you an example" (John 13:15). He says so in John 13:34: "Love one another; as I have loved you." He says so in Matthew 10:25: "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master." And Revelation 3:21 tells us that we can overcome, even as Jesus overcame.

Many today seem to be choosing from three options concerning the human nature of Christ. One is to believe that Jesus was like Adam before the Fall, and therefore to believe that we can't obey the law of God as Jesus did, because He was different from us. The second is to believe that Jesus was like Adam after the Fall, and therefore to believe that we can obey God's law. After all, Jesus did it, and He was just like us. The third is that Jesus was like Adam both before *and* after the Fall. Let's go over each option in more detail.

Number one: If we define sin in terms of a fallen human nature, Jesus would have to be like Adam *before* the Fall, because He was not a sinner. We *are* sinners. Therefore, Jesus was different than we are and He could not be our example. He had an advantage over us in terms of obedience, and we, as sinners, cannot be expected to obey. Indeed, we find it impossible. So instead, we accept His substitutionary obedience and trust His obedience placed to our account in heaven.

Number two: If we define sin in terms of transgression of the law, Jesus could have been like Adam *after* the Fall. This viewpoint says one is a sinner because he sins (and he is not a sinner until he does sin). Jesus was just like Adam after the fall; He had a sinful nature just as we do. He avoided being a sinner by never doing

anything bad. Thus if Jesus was just like us, but never sinned, then He becomes our example in all points, and we can obey as He did, by refraining from transgression.

Number three: If we define sin in terms of a broken relationship, Jesus would then be like Adam *before* the Fall, because He had a spiritual nature from the beginning that was never separated from His Father. But He was also like Adam *after* the Fall, because He lived in complete dependence upon His Father in order to produce the works we see manifest in His life. If the issue in sin is a broken relationship (rather than a sinful nature, or sinful deeds) then Jesus can be our example in showing us how to live in dependence upon a Higher Power. We can obey, because we can become partakers of His spiritual nature, experience the restoration of the broken relationship, and depend upon His strength to overcome. The result? The possibility of total obedience to the law of God.

I believe in the third option. I believe that the sin problem goes far deeper than simply doing bad things. The issue in sin is a broken relationship, a life lived independently of God. Who has the greater temptation to live independently? The one who is sinless or the one who isn't? In that sense, Jesus is a far greater example than we could ask for.

In summary, Jesus was divine and He was human. He took upon His sinless spiritual nature the liabilities of our fallen nature. In this weakened state, He gave us an example of victory from above, rather than victory from within. And that's the real issue in the end, anyway.

In examining this subject, I feel I'm on holy ground. It is an awesome thing to realize that Jesus came and lived life as I have to live it.

Does this make me feel that I am far behind? It certainly does. But does it discourage me? No. Jesus has given too much evidence that He loves me and will continue to help me understand how He lived His life, so that I can live in dependence upon Him, as He lived in dependence upon His Father.

We can be thankful that we are accepted because Jesus' sacrifice still paves our way to the eternal country. And we can also be thankful that He showed us how to overcome, through dependence upon Him: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:23).

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a life lived independently of God. Who has the
greater temptation to live independently?
The one who is sinless or the one who isn't?
Jesus is a greater example than we could ask.*

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost; to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a Church relation; and to the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the Church, by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination.
—The New Hampshire Baptist Confession (1833), Article XIV.

This We Believe/8

George E. Rice

Baptism: union with Christ

Ever since the risen Lord gave the command "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them" (Matt. 28:19),* baptism has been viewed not only as a public testimony that the one baptized has accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour but also as the door through which all must pass in order to become a member of the body of Christ.

Meaning of the term

There is not, however, unanimous agreement in the Christian community as to how this rite should be performed. Seventh-day Adventists follow the practice of immersion, believing that this is the mode of baptism taught by the New Testament and followed by the apostolic church. This belief is held for two reasons:

1. The Greek verb *baptizein* ("to baptize") implies immersion, coming as it does from the root *baptein* ("to dip in or under").¹ Thus the term carries with it the connotation of immersing the baptismal candidate under the water.

Although we recognize that there is danger in building a denominational stance on the idea that a given word in Scripture has only one meaning, the

weight of evidence in the New Testament text points in the direction of baptism by immersion. The three occurrences of *baptein* in the New Testament reflect its meaning to submerge: (1) the rich man requested father Abraham to permit Lazarus to dip (*baptein*) the tip of his finger into cold water so that Lazarus might moisten his tongue (see Luke 16:24); (2) Jesus identified His betrayer by dipping (*baptein*) a morsel and handing it to Judas (see John 13:26); and (3) as the commander of the armies of heaven, Jesus' garments appeared to John as though they had been dipped (*baptein*) in blood (see Rev. 19:13).

The verb *baptizein* is used three different ways in the New Testament. The first is in connection with water baptism. The references are too numerous to list here; any good concordance will give them. Second, *baptizein* is used metaphorically by Jesus when He referred to His Passion as His baptism (see Matt. 20:22, 23; Mark 10:38, 39; Luke 12:50), and also by John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter, and referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit (see Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16). Third, this same verb is used for ablutions or washings. The two occurrences of this use of *baptizein*, rather than supporting baptism by affusion, simply reflects the use of this Greek verb to denote washings to cleanse from Levitical impurity.² Both Mark 7:3,4 and Luke 11:38, where *baptizein* is used in this manner,

have to do with the ritual washing of the hands. In addition, the noun *baptisma* is also used in connection with water baptism and metaphorically in reference to Jesus' Passion.

On this basis, J. K. Howard observes: "There is no evidence that sprinkling was ever an apostolic practice; indeed, the evidence all points to it being a late introduction."³

2. In addition to the fact that the term *baptizein* indicates immersion, the accounts of water baptism given to us in the New Testament suggest that the people were immersed. For example, the baptism of John, which paved the way for Christian baptism, appears to have been by immersion. The crowds that came to John "were baptized [*ebaptizonto*] by him in the river Jordan" (Matt. 3:6; cf. Mark 1:5). We read too that John "was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there" (John 3:23).

Submitting to John's baptism, Jesus also was immersed in the Jordan. "And when Jesus was baptized [*baptistheis*], he went up immediately from the water" (Matt. 3:16). Mark also says, "Jesus . . . was baptized [*ebaptisthe*] by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water . . ." (chap. 1:9, 10).

The baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch likewise supports the position that immersion was practiced in the apostolic church. "And they both went down into the water,

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Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized [ebaptisen] him. And when they came up out of the water . . ." (Acts 8:38, 39).

The imagery used by Paul in Romans 6:4 in connection with his teaching on baptism and the believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection suggests that, for Paul, baptism involved immersion.

The passage dealing with baptism in the post-apostolic *Didache* corroborates the evidence for immersion in the New Testament. This famous passage allows pouring only as a last resort: "Concerning baptism, this is the way you shall baptize. Having first recited all these things, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living water. If there is no flowing water, then baptize in other water, and if you are unable to use cold then use warm. But if you have neither, then pour water upon the head three times, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."⁴

Door into the church

The idea of baptism as the door into the church was derived from Jesus' commission. The nations were to be made disciples by being taught and baptized. Those who heard Peter's Pentecostal sermon asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:37, 38). Luke then tells us that three thousand were added that day (see verse 41). He does not specify to what these baptized ones were added, but it is clear from the context that they were added to the body of believers. Luke again says, "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (verse 47). It is understood that these people who were added day by day entered the Christian community in the same way as those who responded to Peter's message on the day of Pentecost—by baptism. We are unable here to speak in detail of the people in Samaria who were baptized by Philip (see chap. 8:4-25); of Saul (see chap. 9:1-19); of Cornelius, his family, and friends (see chap. 10); of Lydia and her household (see chap. 16:11-15); of the Philippian jailer and his family (see verses 16-40); of Crispus and his family (see chap. 18:8); of the twelve "disciples" found by Paul at Ephesus (see chap. 19:1-7); and of countless others, all who entered the Christian community by baptism.

Door into a relationship

Not only is baptism the door through which a person must pass in order to enter into the community of believers, it is also the door through which one enters into an intimate relationship with Jesus. A part of this relationship is sharing His baptism, His Passion.

The preposition *eis* is used "to denote the aim sought and accomplished by

baptism."⁵ It is with this preposition that Paul establishes the experience of a relationship with Jesus: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into [eis] Christ Jesus were baptized into [eis], his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into [eis] death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3, 4).

Space doesn't allow us here to discuss the Biblical concept of the corporate body. However, it may be suggested that Paul had the corporate idea in mind when he says that when we are baptized we enter into the experience of Christ's Passion, an intimate experience that can be shared only by those who submit to the baptismal rite.

Concerning Paul's teaching on baptism, Howard says, "In the symbolic act of baptism the believer enters into the death of Christ, and in a real sense that death becomes his death; and he enters into the resurrection of Christ, and that resurrection becomes his resurrection."⁶ He continues, "Baptism is thus the place where man and Christ are bound together. It is this sharing in these events which was in Paul's mind as he writes elsewhere, 'I have been crucified with Christ . . . and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2:20)."⁷

Because we believe the baptismal waters do not possess supernatural power, and that faith accomplishes what baptism signifies, Seventh-day Adventists do not practice infant baptism.

Door into the covenant

Circumcision was the sign of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and His Old Testament people. However, Paul viewed the covenant relationship as being broken by the rejection of Jesus. What had been the sign of the covenant now became a sign of man's attempts to save himself, a position entirely foreign to Paul's teaching of salvation by faith in Jesus. Although God's covenant and His promises remained the same, there was now a new people, and a new sign of the covenant, as far as Paul was concerned. The sign of physical circumcision had been replaced by baptism, representing a spiritual circumcision of the heart and a salvific relationship with Jesus.

Paul says, "In him [Jesus] also you were

circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:11, 12).

Having the "body of flesh" removed through the spiritual circumcision performed by Jesus, the one baptized now "puts on Christ" and enters into the covenant relationship with Jesus. As a result he is in line to receive the fulfillment of the covenant promises.

Again Paul says, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. . . . If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:27-29).

The text of the New Testament presents baptism by immersion as the mode used by John the Baptist and the first evangelists of the apostolic church. Immersion was the mode of baptism to which Jesus submitted. It is the imagery of immersion that Paul uses in speaking of the intimate relationship that exists between the newborn Christian and Jesus when the Christian experiences death, burial, and resurrection together with Jesus.

Through baptism the new Christian enters into the church and the covenant relationship with Jesus. Baptism replaces circumcision as the sign of this covenant relationship. With the removal of the "body of flesh," he who is baptized "puts on Christ." Thus he becomes a spiritual child of Abraham and is in line for the fulfillment of the covenant promises.

¹ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 131, 132.

² Albrecht Oepke, "Bapto, Baptizo," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), vol. 1, p. 535. Cf. Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

³ J. K. Howard, *New Testament Baptism* (London: Pickering & Inglis, Ltd., 1970), p. 48.

⁴ *Didache*, 7.

⁵ Oepke, *op. cit.*, p. 539. Cf. Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁶ Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

* The Scripture quotations in this article are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1952, 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

Not only is baptism the door through which a person must pass in order to enter into the community of believers, but it is also the door through which one enters into an intimate relationship with Jesus.

The English Connection

In this new book the stirring words of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English Puritans still burn with a holy fire undimmed by years of neglect and ill-deserved obscurity. It is our loss if we ignore this heritage.

Recently I read what I consider to be the most fascinating and spiritually beneficial 250 pages I have come across in a long time—*The English Connection*, by Dr. Bryan W. Ball, head of the religion department of Newbold College near London. I don't often editorialize about a book, but this volume has done so much for my own soul and mind that I must recommend it to you and share some concepts from it. (See also the excerpt on pages 10-12 and ordering information on page 24.)

What is this "English connection" that has so excited me? In a nutshell, it is that there is a clear stream that connects much of the best in present Christian thought and practice to Puritan Bible study and theology. Dr. Ball is particularly interested in tracing the Puritan roots of Seventh-day Adventism's major doctrinal positions. We little realize as Seventh-day Adventists (or Baptists, or Methodists, or Lutherans) the doctrinal debt we owe to these godly students and expositors of God's Word. We stand upon a foundation of scriptural understanding that was shared by many Puritan thinkers.

Puritans, by and large, have had a bad press. Johy Pym's neat phrase "that odious and factious name of Puritan" conjures up the stereotype of narrowness, bigotry, even hypocrisy. Dr. Ball persuasively refutes this view and presents these preachers and writers of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England as men with firm principles, strong beliefs, and a dedication to truth that should be the envy of us all. These men of God knew what they believed and stood faithfully for it even unto death. Their chief concern was for purity of doctrine and holiness of life. Their primary question was: Does this practice or doctrine have the support of Scripture?

Puritans such as Baxter, Flavel, Alleine, Owen, Bunyan, and others are little known and even less read today. It was not always so. The writings of these men were widely read in their own day and have led countless individuals, then and later, to understand the plan of salvation and how to find peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. John Bunyan wrote nine books while in a jail for his beliefs. (Only

his *Pilgrim's Progress* remains widely known today; other works, such as *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and *The Holy City*, have fallen into undeserved obscurity.) John Flavel wrote six volumes of devotional and doctrinal thought, warm and practical to the end. Joseph Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted* sold twenty thousand copies when first published in 1672 and was so popular that another edition of fifty thousand was published three years later. It is a pity that so few are acquainted with these and other Puritan works today. In spite of the centuries between their time and ours, the spiritual themes they talked about are those timeless ones that still concern us. Their statements are gripping and burn with the fire that the Holy Spirit transmits through those whom He uses to explain and expound the Word. This is not to say that these writers were faultless in all they believed or taught. But I'm convinced that their grasp of Scripture and their personal devotion and commitment to the Lord Jesus would put most of us modern preachers to shame.

Their convictions were forged in the crucible of their experience in attempting to purify or bring reform to the Established Church. Many suffered cruelly for their faith. Between 1,700 and 2,000 clergy, many of them the cream of the nation's spiritual and intellectual leadership, refused to compromise their consciences by complying with the Act of Uniformity passed by Parliament in 1662. What came to be known as the "Great Ejection" followed, in which those who would not swear total loyalty to the Established Church were ejected from their pulpits and positions. Further restrictions followed. The Corporation Act excluded them from preaching; the Conventicle Act prohibited private meetings for worship attended by more than four persons other than the immediate family; the Five Mile Act prevented ejected clergy from living within five miles of a town in which they had preached in recent years! An end to such measures came in 1689 with the Toleration Act, but it was in these years of persecution that Puritan thought flowered and reached its maturity.

From the rich harvest field to be found in

the twelve chapters of this book, let me share with you some gleanings dealing with righteousness by faith, baptism, the relationship of obedience to faith, and Christ's return. I'm sure you will find, as I have, many gems of thought to use in sermons as well as to enrich your own soul. There is room for only a sampling here; to have the entire treasure, you will need to buy the book for yourself.

On the subject of the Lord our righteousness, Puritanism was never more certain of its claims than when contending that Jesus Christ has provided the full and final answer to man's terrible spiritual dilemma. The strength of Puritan theology is that it comes to grips with the whole message of Scripture, much in the same manner as did the apostle Paul. That message begins with the human race falling rapidly from righteousness to unrighteousness. This unrighteous condition is like "a desperate disease" striking at the very heart of man's being and threatening his future.

Many Puritans taught that man is "doubly lost" and subject to a "twofold unrighteousness." By this they meant (1) the guilt of Adam's imputed sin gives man an unrighteous standing before God, and (2) man's unrighteous character is due as well to his own sinful actions. Thus man's unrighteousness has both a legal and a moral aspect. He is unrighteous when measured against the holiness of God's character and the requirements of His law, and he is also unrighteous in himself since he has a fallen nature. Thus Richard Baxter concludes that Christ came to seek and to save that which was "doubly lost," those who are both "guilty" and "unholy" (page 52). Since man is doubly unrighteous, it is God's purpose, the Puritans taught, to restore him through the gospel "to that twofold righteousness which he lost"—to freedom from guilt and to holiness of life.

Above all, it is Christ only that provides the righteousness man needs. Baxter claims that the righteousness that man may have as the basis of his salvation "is wholly in Christ, and not one grain in ourselves" (page 53), and that nothing can, or need, be added to that righteousness in order to make it sufficient for salvation.

George Downham (*Treatise of Justification*) sums up justification simply as "the imputation of righteousness," which counteracts both the imputation of Adam's sin and the guilt of man's own sin. On the subject of imputation John Flavel has this gem: "If Adam's sin became ours by imputation then so doth Christ's righteousness also become ours by imputation, Romans 5:17. If Christ were made a sinner by the imputation of our sins to Him, who had no sin of His own, then we are made righteous by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, who have no righteousness of our own."—Page 57.

Puritanism was united on most issues, but it was divided, sometimes very deeply, on the question of Christian baptism. According to Ball, the first known Baptist Church in England dates from 1612, but for political and ecclesiastical reasons it was not until after 1640 that Baptist convictions took firm root in English soil. The Baptists were a new breed of Puritan, and a new brotherhood of preachers. Baptists believed that according to the Bible, the essential characteristics of Christian life and experience were to precede the external application of water. Baptism was therefore the outward testimony to an inward experience. There was no efficacy in the act itself, no regenerating or cleansing property in the water. Rather, it was symbolic; baptism without faith would not result in salvation. Thus they stood opposed to infant baptism on scriptural grounds. Said John Tombes: "You may as soon extract water out of a flint, as draw a command to baptize infants out of Scripture."—Page 91.

The point of contention between the Baptists and the rest of Puritanism was that the former accused the latter of not practicing what it preached. Puritanism professed complete adherence to Scripture as the norm for faith and practice, but it failed, said their Baptist brethren, to follow the form of baptism outlined in Scripture. There Jesus commanded that the new believer must be taught before being baptized. A prerequisite to baptism is belief, an intelligent commitment to Jesus Christ. Thus the Baptists concluded from their Bible study that baptism was to be administered only to believers, upon consent and profession of faith, and they saw as their divinely ordained task the taking of Puritanism to its logical conclusion.

"Gospel Obedience," a chapter title in Ball's book, is taken from Puritan writer Richard Baxter, and not, as one might suspect, from a source with a strong legalistic bent. The Puritans saw obedience as the sequel to faith, law as the concomitant of grace. To the Puritan mind, law in its broadest meaning applied to the entire Bible. In this sense, law was understood fundamentally as God's revealed will. It was normal for Puritans to distinguish between moral, ceremonial, and civil (or judicial) law. John Owen

divided the whole Mosaic code into these three sections. The civil law, given by God to Israel under Moses' leadership, was not binding in the moral sense, but according to John White there was much in it of permanent value to mankind as a whole.

Puritan writers saw a distinct difference between the moral law and the ceremonial law. The latter pointed specifically to Christ and the way of salvation to be revealed in Him at the cross, and obviously had a restricted function and a limited duration. The moral law applied to all people in all times. They pointed out that the ceremonial laws were written on scrolls while the moral law was inscribed on two tables of stone.

On the other hand, the moral law they deemed to be in an entirely different category. To the Puritan mind the Ten Commandments were nothing less than a transcript of the character of God and a verbalization of the essence of the divine nature. Ralph Venning declared that "to find fault with the Law—were to find fault with God" (*ibid.*). Since God is eternal, His ten commandments are viewed as eternal, never to be repealed or disannulled. This point was well emphasized by Francis Bampfield: "There never was, never will be, a repeal of this law, which is so lively an expression of the holy, righteous nature of Elohim Himself."—Page 124.

Antinomianism, of course, has persisted through the years in one form or another. Many Puritan preachers and writers consciously opposed these attempts to abrogate the Ten Commandments, yet, while doing so they were careful to show that there is no saving merit in the law. It can point out the disease, but it cannot heal. The law is like a mirror that discovers sin in the life. In the words of Flavel, "Till God show you the face of sin in the glass of the law . . . till you have had some sick nights and sorrowful days for sin, you will never go up and down seeking an interest in the blood of His sacrifice."—Page 131.

One of the main contributions that Puritanism made to the recovery of the total Biblical message was a renewed emphasis on Christ's second coming and the doctrines associated with that event.

Puritans rejected a spiritualized interpretation of this doctrine as contrary to the plain meaning of Scripture. There was possibly no point of wider agreement among Puritan theologians than that of

the manner of Christ's coming. They firmly believed the scriptural passages describing the Lord's coming with flames of fire and a host of angels in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Baxter describes it thus: "If there be such cutting down of boughs and spreading of garments, and crying hosanna, to one that comes into Jerusalem riding on an ass; what will there be when He comes with His angels in His glory? If they that heard Him preach the gospel of the kingdom have their hearts turned within them, that they return and say, 'Never man spake like this man,' then sure they that behold His majesty and His kingdom will say 'There was never glory like this glory.'"—Page 180.

Thomas Adams was one of the many seventeenth-century Puritans who saw the entire post-New Testament age in an eschatological sense. For them, the *last days* began in the time of the apostles and reached down to the *last day*. The second coming of Christ meant that the work of salvation that He had begun at His first coming would be completed. That work, they argued, could not be complete, or finally efficacious, until Christ had returned.

The Advent hope had tremendous effects upon the Puritan mind. That hope was an essential element in their Christian faith. It motivated them to prepare for the coming of the Bridegroom. Belief in Christ's second coming was a very special way to help Christians thrive in grace and holiness. To many of these Puritan preachers, fellowshiping with Christ in glory was measurably dependent on fellowshiping with Him in grace. Thus the Second Advent hope was an indispensable factor, perhaps even the chief factor, in the marked spirituality that characterized both church and individual believer in Puritan England.

All this Dr. Ball beautifully brings out in his book. But it is the words of these Puritan preachers themselves that stir my soul and drive me to my knees praying for greater devotion and understanding. It is the clarity with which they present the Lord Jesus and the scriptural basis for their beliefs that causes me to thank God that I have the privilege of raising my voice to preach a gospel that can build on their foundation and restore neglected truth to a world that desperately needs to know the Lord Jesus Christ before He comes.—J.R.S.

*There is a clear stream that connects
much of the best in present Christian thought
and practice to Puritan Bible study and theology.
We little realize the doctrinal debt we owe
to these godly expositors of God's Word.*

Reader Service Page

This page lists in one convenient place all the ministerial resources currently being offered to our readers. Select from a variety that includes sermon planning, healthful living, archeology, and more.

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Ministry Tape of the Month. A professional-growth program covering preaching, worship, teaching, leadership, theology, evangelism, and counseling. Twelve months, one 90-minute cassette per month, \$45.

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Archeology, Bible Study Tools. "What Is New in Biblical Archeology?" by Dr. Siegfried H. Horn, and "Tools and Their Use in the Minister's Workshop," by Dr. Walter F. Specht. Originally included in April, 1980, MINISTRY. 24 pp., \$1.00.

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The Complete Plan Book for Sunday Eucharistic Celebrations. The Catholic version of the sermon plan book described above, edited by the Word of God Institute, and fully reflecting the appropriate theology and semantics of the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. \$3.95.

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Packet of Four Pamphlets: "How to Stop Smoking," "If You Smoke," "Alcohol: Ten Reasons Why You Don't Need It," and "Is Marijuana Really All That Bad?" Plus catalog from Narcotics Education, Inc. \$1.00.

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World view

The first Seventh-day Adventist magazine to be published in the Soviet Union in more than fifty years contains devotional reading, Bible study, practical counsel, messages from church leaders, and news.



Seventh-day Adventists in Russia

In December, 1977, I visited with E. A. Tarasov, Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs in the Soviet Union. Our one-hour conversation ranged over many areas of religious liberty. I suppose the diplomats would characterize our exchange as a "frank" exploration of differing concepts. In other words, we didn't see eye to eye on many issues, but neither did we engage in fisticuffs or denigrate each other's parentage.

During our conversation I requested that a few young Seventh-day Adventists be permitted to study theology at one of the church's seminaries outside the Soviet Union. I mentioned also hopes of Soviet Adventists' being able to publish a magazine—already a subject of discussion before my visit. Dr. Tarasov responded that both requests were—since the October, 1977, revision of the constitution and in the existing church-state climate—"theoretically possible."

Today, two Soviet Adventist theological students are at Newbold College, Berkshire, England; three more attend Friedensau Seminary in East Germany. And pictured on this page is the cover of the first Seventh-day Adventist magazine to be published in the Soviet Union in more than fifty years! The cover reads: "Desk Reference Serving the Seventh-day Adventist Christian Churches, 1980."

What are the contents of its 146 pages? The two lead articles reflect a theme dear to Soviet officialdom—and to all citizens who endured the Great War—peace. Few Christians anywhere would object that

peace is a political rather than religious concern. Preaching the gospel is, after all, possible only for survivors. A nuclear war would leave few. The articles: "In Defense of Peace—The Christian Peace Conference (CPC) Session" and "Christian Peace Conference Delegation in the Countries of East Africa." (It is not likely that either conference lamented the invasion of Afghanistan!) It may be assumed that these articles were obligatory.

Beginning on page 9 is a section of "Spiritual Meditation." Contents: "Two Worshipers"; "The Bible Speaks on God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit"; "True Repentance"; "A New Commandment"; "Reflection on Romans"; "Reformation—True or Spurious"; and "You Will Find Rest for Your Souls."

A section titled "Fraternal Ties" has three features: "Visits to Neighbors and Friends"; "A Pastoral Letter" from the Adventist General Conference president Neal Wilson and vice-president Alf Lohne to Adventist Christians in the Soviet Union (encouraging divided brethren to get together); and an article "In Support of Fraternal Ties."

In following sections, D. O. Yunak explores fifty years of Christian witness in Bessarabia. Leaders of worship services learn "Some Principles of Bible Interpretation" and what ordination is all about. Choir directors are given "friendly suggestions" and readers learn the why of the "copper serpent" and the what of legalism.

There is local news: "Inter-republic Meeting of SDA Ministers," "Reconstruction of the Church Building in Tula," and "Good News From the Ukraine." The magazine also includes Week of Prayer readings and morning devotional materials for 1981.

Bug-free chapel

If California prison chaplains have their way, the only one who will hear prayers and other conversations in chapels of that State's correctional facilities for youthful offenders will be the Lord Himself.

The chaplains are fighting a plan by the California Youth Authority to put bugging devices into the chapels. Bugs are not used in adult correctional facilities.

A spokesman for the youth authority said the devices were needed in the chapels for security reasons, but confessed that he could not recall any serious incidents that

had taken place. C. E. Curtis, president of the Greater Stockton Ministerial Association, charged that the plan would violate the youths' religious freedom and the priest-penitent privileges of the clergy. Inmates, he said, "need a sanctuary where they can go without fearing that 'Big Brother' is listening."

Forced attendance

What preacher wouldn't covet informed members able to communicate exactly what the sermon was all about? Try to find one who *does* in one small Eastern European country! Baptist clergymen there report that the ratio of believers to informers in services used to be about ten to one, whereas the ratio now is three to one. Every Monday morning pastors are required to submit a written report on weekend church activities to the office of the local Ministry of Cults. What was the content of the sermon preached? Were there visitors? If so, who were they? Were there conversions? Pastors refusing to report have lost their licenses. Of course, there are always the informers. And some are among the converts. They are one source for this report. Now, if only some officials of the Ministry of Cults decide to attend . . .

Unfit for parenthood

Harry and Esther Hough, a Leigh, England, couple who have been foster parents to 47 children, recently applied for permission to adopt a child. Social service workers in this city north of Manchester turned them down. Their marriage was just too happy, the workers explained! A child growing up in their home would not be sufficiently exposed to "negative experiences."

Not only that, the officials went on, the two "had few, if any, negative experiences when children yourselves, and also seem to enjoy a marital relationship where rows and arguments have no place."

The best one can say for the ruling is that it leaves most parents eligible to adopt a child. There aren't many parents like the Houghs. On the other hand, the ruling does, indeed, seem to be just what Mr. Hough called it—"beyond belief."

Unless otherwise credited, items in World View are from Religious News Service. Opinions, however, are the author's.

Roland R. Hegstad

You are what you think

Physiological research continues to demonstrate the truth of Biblical insights into the close relationship between your mind and your body. What happens in the brain really does determine the real you!



The dramatic effect of the mind on physical well-being has been recognized for centuries by both medical practitioners and nonprofessionals alike despite the lack of specific explanations. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Prov. 17:22), Solomon declared some three millennia ago; the scientific validity of this truism is being verified by present-day medical technology.

Demonstrable mental control of the "involuntary" body processes goes back many centuries. Zen and Yoga practitioners can control their heart rate, change the temperature in localized regions of the body, and control various other physiological functions normally considered outside of the conscious will. Primitive fire dancers walk barefoot on burning coals to the amazement of those watching. Much of the doubt regarding such phenomena has now been removed by the development of the currently popular science of biofeedback. Since 1968, when Joe Kamiya first published his findings that people can control their own brain waves, biofeedback has undergone much refinement. By the use of such recording devices as the electroencephalograph (EEG) people can

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now be taught to observe the so-called alpha waves of the brain and by so doing learn to relax, overcome fear, control hormone secretions, and, according to some investigators, even cure migraine headaches, insomnia, and certain diseases.¹

An experiment performed by brain researcher Paul Pietsch in 1972 dramatically demonstrated the fact that body activity is under direct control of the brain. Pietsch removed the brain of a salamander—an animal that normally feeds on worms and other invertebrate animals—and transplanted in its place the brain of a leopard frog tadpole, an animal that feeds on plant life. Surprisingly, the salamander survived the operation and thenceforth refused to eat worms, but fed instead on the plant life that the tadpole normally eats.² The Bible, although not a book dedicated to science, provides remarkable evidence of the effect of the mind on the body. Luke 8 tells of a man who, being possessed by devils, was able to break all the chains and fetters used to bind him, a feat impossible for a person in his normal state. Verse 35 indicates that when Christ cured him he was returned to his "right mind." Ellen White also spoke of the influence of the mind in curing disease: "The relation that exists between the mind and the body is very intimate. . . . The condition of the mind affects the health to a far greater degree than many realize. . . . Disease is sometimes produced, and is often greatly aggravated, by the imagination. Many are lifelong invalids who might be well if they only thought so."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 241.

Recent scientific literature provides strong confirmation. Dianne Hales, former editor of *New Physician* and contributing editor of *Science Year*, claims that personality affects vulnerability to disease. Among her supporting evidence the author relates the portrait that researchers have developed for a rheumatoid arthritis: "A person who is shy, inhibited, self-sacrificing, perfectionist, incapable of expressing anger and hostility, and often troubled by unresolved tensions." She proposes that just as the negative emotions wear away our resistance to illness, positive emotions such as joy, love, and affection may

preserve and restore our health.³

Additional support comes from Norman Cousins' experimental evidence on the curative effect of the placebo. In one experiment half of a group of patients with bleeding ulcers was given a prescription described as a "new and very effective" drug. The other half was given the same prescription but were told it was a "new experimental" drug that was being tested. Seventy percent of the first group were helped significantly, while only 25 percent of the second group were helped. Actually, both groups were given a placebo. Similar results were obtained with patients being treated for mild mental depression who were given placebos after their regular antidepressants were withdrawn. Cousins quotes one researcher, Dr. Arthur K. Shapiro: "Placebos can have profound effects on organic illnesses, including incurable malignancies." In Cousins' own words, "the placebo is not so much a pill as a process. . . . The placebo is the doctor who resides within."⁴ The consensus of experts studying the placebo effect seems to be that the patient's confidence in the doctor administering the placebo activates the brain, which turns on the body's endocrine system to produce hormones that regulate the body's physiology in controlling disease.

The fact that mental stress may have dramatic effects on body physiology recently received strong confirmation from cancer researcher and microbiologist Dr. Vernon Riley.⁵ His work was designed to test the various effects on mice of such stressful situations as fright, overcrowding, and handling. He was able to demonstrate that among the many biochemical changes that occur as a response to anxiety there is a marked increase in the secretion of corticosterone from the adrenal cortex under activation by the hypothalamus of the brain. This increase in corticosterone levels results in a dramatic lowering of the body's immune response to disease as a result of a reduction in the number of circulating lymphocytes (white blood cells that fight invading germs), a decrease in size of the thymus, a gland that is intimately involved in disease resistance, and a loss in the tissue mass of the spleen and lymph nodes. These stressed animals

showed a marked reduction in their resistance to viral infections and other diseases under immunological control, and were less capable of defending themselves against introduced cancer cells. In addition, tumor growth was greatly enhanced in the mice when two to twenty were placed in a single cage as compared to one mouse per cage.

J. P. Henry and J. Meehan support Riley's findings regarding the effect of the emotional state on kidney secretions. Their book *Brain, Behavior and Bodily Disease* points out that the adrenal medulla releases potent chemical neurotransmitters when fear or rage is a component of the inciting stimulation. In fact, growing awareness of the mind-body relationship in controlling disease has led to the development of a new discipline, called psychoneuroimmunology, within the field of behavioral medicine.

Recently, neurophysiologist Leslie L. Iverson offered the intriguing suggestion that the brain may have some undiscovered anxiety-producing and -relieving substance.⁶ Such an observation may well be true; people's moods and behavior can be easily altered by taking various psychotropic agents such as tranquilizers, sedatives, stimulants, and hallucinogens. These agents are effective because they often mimic or counteract naturally occurring chemicals that function within the nervous system.

Several such brain-mediating chemical agents, called neurotransmitters, are known to modern medicine. According to Iverson, some thirty are known or suspected to be transmitters in the brain. (Some scientists estimate as many as a hundred.) Many of these are also known to be involved in the control of emotional states. According to Richard Restak, adrenalin, noradrenalin, and dopamine are naturally occurring neurotransmitters that are known to be involved in arousal, rage, fear, pleasure, motivation, and exhilaration.⁷ He further points out that such depression-producing drugs as reserpine produce their effect by causing the disappearance of the natural neurotransmitters serotonin and noradrenalin. Thus drugs that restore the normal levels of these transmitter substances or increase their effectiveness function as antidepressants.

Neurotransmitters function at specific sites of the nervous system called synapses. These tiny gaps between the ends of interconnecting nerve fibers serve to regulate the passage of nerve impulses. Some synapses have a stimulatory function and enhance the passage of impulses from fiber to fiber. Others have an inhibitory function, preventing the passage of some impulses, and consequently preventing the body from responding to irrelevant stimuli. Whether a synapse is excitatory or inhibitory depends partly upon the type of transmitter substance secreted by the nerve ending at the synapse, and partly on

the nature of the receptor site on which the transmitter acts. When both excitatory and inhibitory fibers converge at synapses, it is the sum of the excitatory and inhibitory effects that determines whether or not a neuron (nerve fiber) will fire and produce an impulse. Since a person's mental state can regulate brain chemistry, the type of transmitter substances released most abundantly in the brain will depend largely on the person's cultivated mood. The longer a particular pattern of thought is entertained, the greater will be the effect of the associated transmitter on brain physiology. Some brain researchers now say there is no twisted thought without a twisted molecule.

It is important to note that brain cells that produce particular transmitters are not randomly distributed in the brain, but are located in specific clusters. Consequently, various physiological states and moods can be induced by stimulating specific areas of the brain. According to reports from various researchers, significantly diverse reactions can be produced by activating brain centers separated by no more than a few millimeters. The significance of this point lies in the fact that repeated use of a particular neural circuit produces changes that make it progressively easier to use that circuit. This, as David Hubel (a 1981 Nobel laureate) suggests, may be the basis of memory enhancement by repetition.⁸

A particular combination of stimuli, if repeated, might enhance one possible pathway among many in a neural structure. If so, then a person may cultivate specific moods by habitually thinking certain thoughts, and since these moods emanate from brain structures that release specific transmitters, these frequently used brain pathways produce characteristic behavioral patterns. Thus a happy attitude, consistently cultivated, becomes a physiological phenomenon that is fixed in the nervous system and gradually becomes automatic. As Paul puts it, "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [we] are changed into the same image" (2 Cor. 3:18). If, as Solomon says, "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine," then physical well-being will result. A morose attitude will have the opposite effect.

Medical technology is suggesting that thought patterns *can* affect a person's health by releasing in the nervous system chemical agents that have dramatic effects

on body physiology. Thus happy, pleasant thoughts may produce a feeling of exhilaration because they are mediated by neurotransmitters that have a stimulatory effect, while thoughts of gloom, anger, or resentment may produce chemicals that have a depressing effect or reduce the body's capability to resist disease.

If a person's thought pattern can affect his health, then mental processes must also have a strong influence on spiritual well-being, for it is through the mind that man communicates with God. Paul's admonition "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5) suggests that what we are in our thinking is what we are in reality. We are not necessarily what we think we are; rather what we think, we are! Our words, our actions, and our attitudes are all expressions of our thoughts, our true selves.

The realization that thought patterns can become fixed by repeated use of the neural circuits that produce them should strongly motivate Christians to take seriously Paul's counsel in Philippians 4:8 to think on those things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Isaiah declares that God dwells with those who are of a contrite and humble spirit (see chap. 57:15). The suggestion is that the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit will remain with us only when the mind is kept in a state of constant receptivity. This receptive state can be cultivated through the habit of meditation and prayerful awareness of God's presence. "Pray without ceasing," we are admonished (1 Thess. 5:17). This state is described by Ellen G. White in these words: "If we consent, He [God] will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

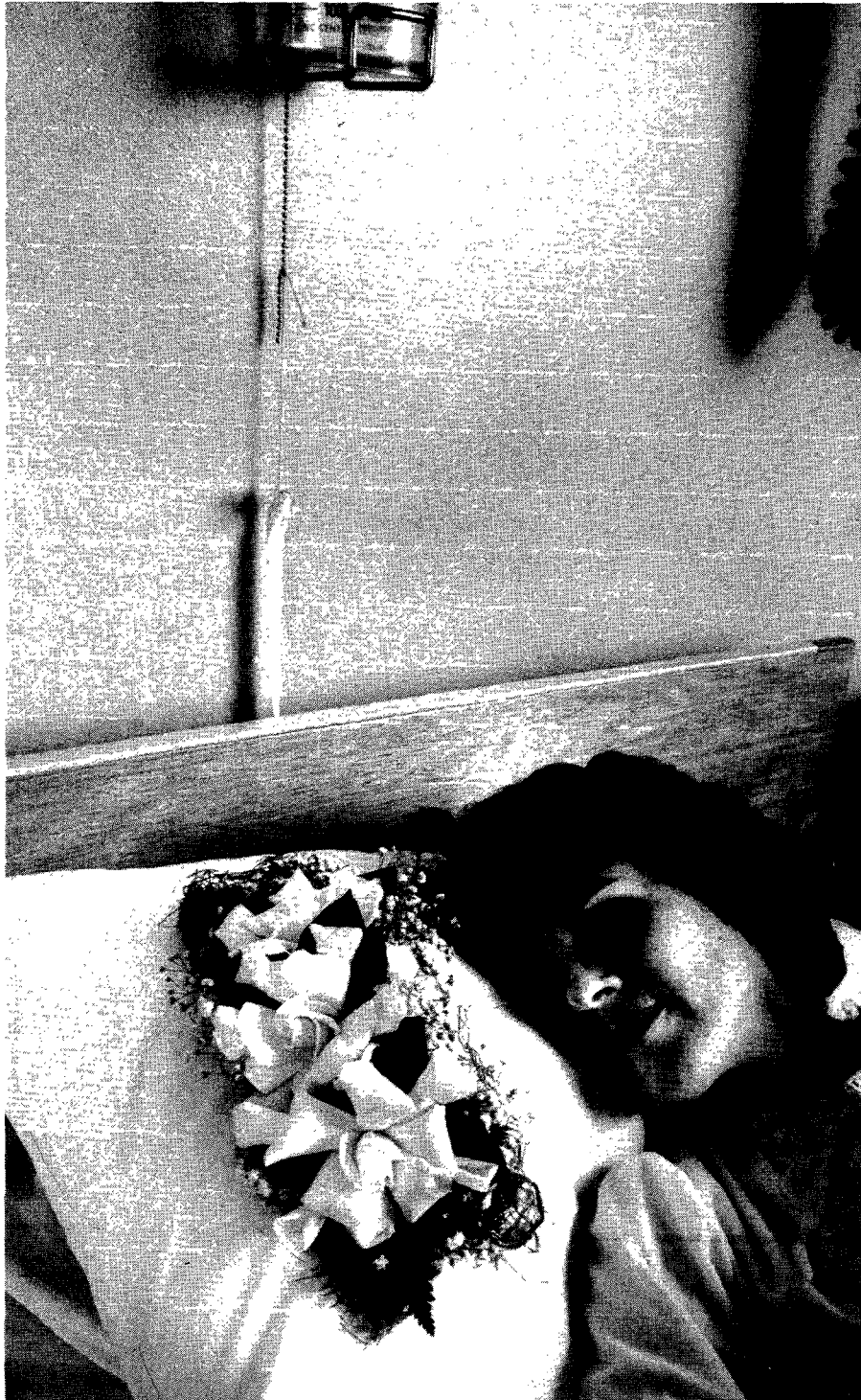
Just as repetition deepens impressions on the mind, it appears that repeated suppression of certain neural processes may result in a gradual lessening of the ability to respond to the associated mental stimuli. This has been shown to be true in such simple invertebrate animals as mollusks. In his study of neural circuits in the mollusk *Aplysia*, brain researcher Eric R. Kandel showed that habituation, a gradual decrease in the strength of a behavior response to a specific stimulation, results

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What we are in our thinking is what we are in reality. We are not necessarily what we think we are; rather, what we think, we are! Our words, our actions, and our attitudes are all expressions of our true selves.

To love and to cherish

I had been loved, but there remained an elusive quality missing in my marriage. Still, no union is perfect, and I had received so very much more than most that I would not complain.



An air of uneasiness hung about our home as I prepared for a trip to the hospital. Christmas was only a few days away, and it seemed important that family life be disrupted as little as possible. Every Christmas card had been written (with an extra pile on hand for "those we forgot"); the tree was up and decorated; every button had been sewed on, every sock mended, every bit of cleaning done; a substitute organist and choir director stood by for church services; surrogate mothers were scheduled; meals were planned ahead and in the freezer.

I lay in the hospital the night before a surgery that was to be both major and mutilating. My thoughts, almost idly, turned to the wedding vows I had spoken eighteen years earlier. Surrounded by friends, flowers, and soft music, I had spoken those words so fervently yet so easily: *"To have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish."*

To have and to hold. Well, we surely didn't start out with much "have," so we had to "hold." Everything we owned could be packed into the back of our car. We didn't feel deprived; quite the contrary. We thought we had the world by the tail. We couldn't have described the excitement and exhilaration we felt.

From this day forward. By present standards eighteen years must be considered "forward." We had our minor skirmishes, even a few small wars, but we learned to make our peace. We started out with glorious plans for the future. My minister husband and I delighted in church-related activity. We were going to wipe out sin together.

For better, for worse. There was lots of "better"—the first parish we served together, the birth of our two children, conceived in love and born in unspeakable joy, the lasting friendships made wherever we went. Not "good," not "better," but "best"!

Eleanor Zoellner writes from Scottsdale, Arizona. "This piece," she says, "is a twenty-sixth wedding anniversary tribute to my husband, Jack, a minister of the Lutheran Church in America."

TOM RADCLIFFE

There was some "worse," too. The uncertainty of a new parish, wondering whether a child would make the right decision, seeing an aged parent die. But we didn't just survive. Our marriage grew and flourished. Friends lost partners through accident or illness. Others lost children to drugs or strange religious cults. We were more than just lucky; we were blessed.

For richer, for poorer. We hadn't become rich in material things. We couldn't afford expensive vacations, the newest home, or the latest car. Yet we were richer by far than the childless singles we knew. We were infinitely richer than the boat people or the victims of aggression or the survivors of war and famine. We suffered an embarrassment of riches!

In sickness and in health. An abundance of good health flooded our path. A broken bone here, a cut lip there, but no devastating illnesses—until this.

Before leaving for the hospital, there

had been no pillow talk, no hand holding, no subtle references to my possibly not coming home. We were very matter of fact. We chose to look ahead several months into the future when things would be back to normal. I wanted no company on the way to the operating room.

For my family, it was to be business as usual. Daddy having breakfast with the children, a get-everybody-off-to-school kind of day. Keep everything orderly and neat.

To love and to cherish. Love has many voices. I had been chosen because I had been loved. I had children because I had been loved. I had many gifts that said "I love you." But "cherish"? That was the one elusive quality missing in my marriage. But no union is perfect, and I had had so very much more than most that I would not complain.

Very late the next afternoon the cocoon spun by the anesthetic began to separate. I

was returning. As the mist parted, I became aware of a heavenly scent—elegant, luxurious, penetrating, persistent. I tried vainly to identify the exquisite fragrance. It didn't go away; it followed every turn of my head. No perfume ever smelled like this. Back came memories of proms, parties, pretty girls, nervous young men bearing corsages, weddings, anniversaries, every golden moment forever remembered.

Then I knew. One of my favorite flowers—here in my hospital room! I slipped into a twilight sleep and dreamed pleasantly. I awakened once again to that exhilarating yet gentle scent. Pinned to my pillow lay a corsage of three magnificent gardenias, pure white and absolutely perfect. An invitation to smile and live again; to dance and sing again; to love and be loved again.

In that one, simple, loving gesture, my husband had shown me "cherish"!

Prayers from the parsonage

Jets slice the sky on the airways over O'Hare, and I dream of booking a flight to visit my mother in England or my sister in California.

If only "Nonny" lived close enough to share the children's discoveries and accomplishments. There are times when Hans would love to sit by his grandmother for a story or when Lisa would like to show someone else her school papers. I wish we could sit around the table, set with mother's blue-and-white china, and have a good talk. Sometimes I have a question to

ask or an idea to suggest, and sometimes I'd just like to give her a big hug.

If Lauri were near, we could pick and can fruit or cut and sew patterns together. Our children—stairstep in height—would enjoy birthday parties and trips to the zoo and picnics in the park. Occasionally sis and I would stay up late while we reminisced about growing up and laughed over family pictures.

Instead, we write letters and send a cassette now and then. At birthdays there are packages, at holidays, phone calls. Each year we talk about making a trip for Christmas or summer vacation, but lack of time and money keep us home.

I miss my family, Lord. Yes, we have many friends and could look for a substi-

tute grandma or auntie. Different people have been included in our celebrations, and we are richer for it. But deep inside is an unfulfilled longing, an ache for a mother's care and a sister's understanding.

"And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked around about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mark 3:33-35).

I'd forgotten, Lord, that You miss me, Your sister, as I yearn for my relatives. Who knows better than You that we were not meant to live apart from those who love us best?

Cherry B. Habenicht

You are what you think

Continued from page 27

from a progressive decrease in the amount of transmitter conveyed from the nerve cells to the target cells they innervate.⁹ After eight days of habituation, 30 percent of the synaptic connections were no longer effective. Although one cannot safely make correlations between the neural processes of lower animals and those of man, the implication is strong that permanent changes may take place in the nervous system when certain neural pathways are not used because of the suppression of the stimuli that would activate them. Thus it may become progressively more difficult to respond to suggestions of the Holy Spirit if we habitually suppress repeated urgings to respond.

The mind is the medium through which

God communicates with man. It is man's mind that makes him human, created in God's image; and it is by the renewing of the mind that we become sons of God. The power of the mind to influence body and spirit cannot be overestimated. Both our physical and our spiritual well-being are dependent upon good mental health.

Modern medical studies are verifying the ancient wisdom of Solomon. A spirit of gratitude and praise apparently does promote health of body and soul. Is it not, then, a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings? As much a duty as it is to pray? There is every reason for Christians to be the happiest people on earth, and, if Solomon is correct, the healthiest as well!

¹ Scott Morris, S. Wilson and R. Roe in *Readings in the Life Sciences*, (New York: West Publishing Co., 1975), p. 247.

² Paul Pietsch, "Shuffle Brain," *Harper's*, May, 1972, p. 41.

³ Dianne Hale, "Psycho-immunity," *Science Digest*, November, 1981, p. 12.

⁴ Norman Cousins, "The Mysterious Placebo," *Saturday Review*, Oct. 1, 1977, p. 8.

⁵ Vernon Riley, "Psychoneuroendocrine Influence on Immuno-competence and Neoplasia," *Science*, June 5, 1981, vol. 212, p. 1100.

⁶ L. L. Iverson, "The Chemistry of the Brain," *Scientific American*, September, 1979, p. 134.

⁷ Richard Restak, "Psychochemistry of the Brain," in *Mind and Super-mind*, edited by Albert Rosenfeld (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977), p. 88.

⁸ David Hubel, "The Brain," *Scientific American*, September, 1979, p. 44.

⁹ Eric R. Kandel, "Small Systems of Neurons," *ibid.*, p. 66.

Shop talk

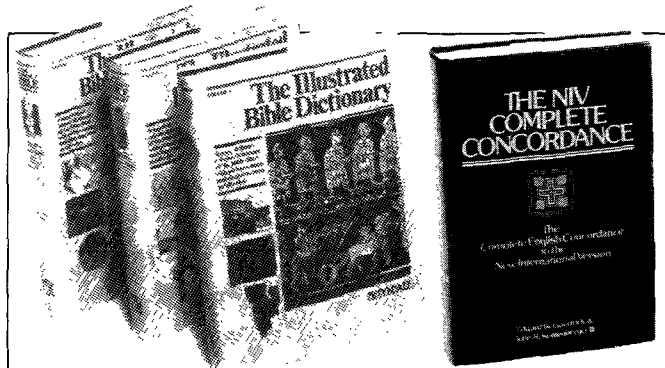
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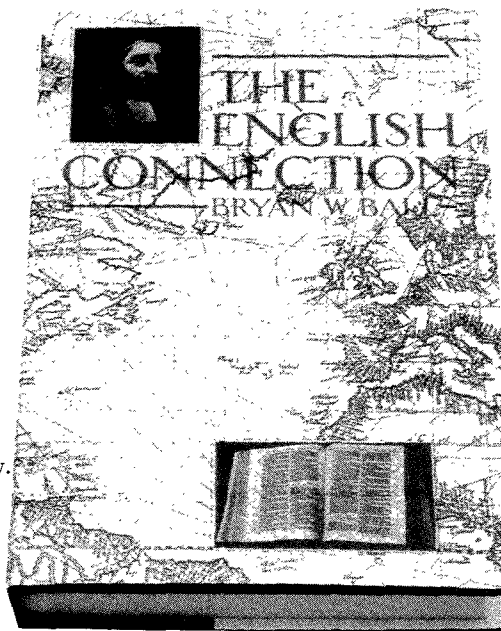
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Family Life '82

"Christ the Restorer—Bringing Reconciliation to our Fractured Society" is the theme for the eighth annual Family Life Conference to be held September 6-15, 1982, on the Andrews University campus, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

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- "The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Family" and "The Family as the Center of Redemption," by David Mains, senior speaker for Chapel of the Air radio broadcast and former pastor of Chicago's Inner Circle church.
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Practical application of the

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Seminar tapes available

Tapes from the Seminar on Church Growth and Pastoral Leadership held on the Andrews University campus in September, 1981, are available for \$2.75 per tape. This seminar, sponsored jointly by the university and MINISTRY, featured John Savage (Encountering the Inactive Member); James F. Engel (The Great Commission or the Great Commotion?); Douglas A. Walrath (Leading the Church Into Mission); Mark Finley (How to Develop an Evangelistic Church); William Liversidge (Principles of Church Growth); T. A. McNealy (Pastoral Evangelism); Carole Kilcher (Pastor Couple: Duel or Duo?); and Ivan Warden (Leading the Church in Urban Ministry). For a list of individual tapes available and ordering information, write: Institute of Church Ministry, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104.

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How much of your leadership potential are you putting to use? Research indicates probably only about 10 percent! But you can improve your leadership abilities. One way is through the Leadership Effectiveness Series, by Dr. Howard Hendricks. This eight-tape series provides a fast-paced, humorous, and refreshing approach based on Biblical principles. It will help you evaluate yourself as a leader and set goals for the future. Dr. Hendricks is chairman of the Department of Christian Education at Dallas Theological Seminary and a well-known communicator in the Christian community.

For more information, write: Leadership Dynamics International, 5780 Peachtree-Dunwoody Road NE., Suite 210, Atlanta, Georgia 30342.

SEMINAR ON CHURCH GROWTH

August 29 to September 2, 1982

Sunday, August 29

Keynote Address: Charles E. Bradford, vice-president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; author of *Preaching to the Times*.

Monday, August 30

Motivating and Training the Laity

Featured Speaker: Carl George, director, Charles Fuller Institute; coordinator, D.Min. program, Fuller Theological Seminary. Plus: Monte Sahlin.

Tuesday, August 31

Making the Small Church Effective

Featured Speaker: Carl Dudley, McCormick Theological Seminary; author of *Making the Small Church Effective* and *Where Have All Our People Gone?* Plus: Skip Bell, Des Cummings, Roger Dudley, Arnold Kurtz.

Wednesday, September 1

Care and Feeding of Volunteers

Featured Speaker: Douglas Johnson, director, Institute for Church Development, Ridgewood, New Jersey; author of *The Care and Feeding of Volunteers*. Plus: Don Jacobsen, Roy Naden, Rex Edwards.

Thursday, September 2

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Seminar on Church Growth

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Recommended reading

Even if you don't know Hebrew you don't have to miss the insights that come from the original languages. The "Theological Wordbook" is the first full lexicon of the Hebrew Old Testament designed for you.

John Wesley

Stanley Ayling, Abingdon, Nashville, Tennessee, 1979, 350 pages, \$10.50. Reviewed by B. Russell Holt, executive editor, MINISTRY.

Among the numerous biographies of Wesley, Ayling's must be considered in some respects a "revisionist" view of Methodism's founder. The publisher calls the author's portrait "vivid and objective." It is that, but it borders as well on the unsympathetic. Wesley comes across in this biography as a rather joyless, tactless, contradictory, and opinionated creature. Yet, Ayling gives his subject his due at times as well. All in all, worth reading.

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, editors, Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1980, 2 volumes, 1124 pages, \$34.95. Reviewed by Jerry Gladson, associate professor of religion, Southern Missionary College.

Serious students of Scripture who have been denied opportunity for study in the original languages long for insights that can only be gained thereby. The *Theological Wordbook*, created to fill that need, is the first full lexicon of the Hebrew Old Testament, designed for use by those unskilled in Hebrew. This represents a real breakthrough in practical lexicography and places the results of advanced study in the hands of all who wish it.

The work is divided into three main sections. The major portion, occupying the lion's share of the two volumes, consists of a Hebrew lexicon. Then follows an Aramaic lexicon for use with Daniel and Ezra, and a concluding index for correlating the *Wordbook* with Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance*. Because of the deficiencies in Strong's lexicography, this index was a necessity for use in the *Wordbook* in conjunction with Strong, but it enables the student to locate the Hebrew word behind the English in Strong, and then profit from the up-to-date discussion in the *Wordbook*.

Each Hebrew entry is alphabetized according to its Hebrew consonants and transliterated for the English reader. A cross-indexing system permits one to

locate the root cluster from which the word is believed to have been derived. Also, under the introductory section, "Suggestions for Use," may be found a full discussion of Hebrew phonology, particularly valuable for one unfamiliar with the language. A small amount of time spent here will enable anyone to learn how to pronounce transliterated Hebrew words with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

Definitions come in two "sizes." Words determined to be of major importance are treated in extended articles, which survey Biblical usage, etymology, cognates, ancient versional translations, synonyms, antonyms, theological significance, and generally conclude with a bibliography. All other words are given one-line definitions.

Although words gain their significance from the context in which they are found, not from a lexical definition or root meaning, this work is still an exciting tool for the study of the Old Testament. Here the Hebraist will find a lexicon with an extended analysis of key theological words from a conservative perspective that may profitably be compared with the more technical *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. The pastor or other serious student of Scripture (with or without a knowledge of Hebrew) will find it a veritable treasure house of exegetical surprises. With proper use, many a sermon could be enriched with the rich deposit of easily accessible lexical study contained in the *Wordbook*. It can only be hoped a similar work for New Testament Greek will soon be produced!

Students, Churches, and Higher Education

R. T. Gribbon, Judson Press, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1981, \$6.95, paper. Reviewed by Richard E. Barron, associate youth director, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The congregation that has a sense of mission for college students will find this book an invaluable source of ideas and suggestions for ministry. Gribbon provides interesting insights into today's college students that will help the church to understand them better. He then helps a church plan for campus ministry and includes descriptions of what other pastors

and their congregations have done and are doing to reach students and faculty.

O Come, Let Us Worship: Corporate Worship in the Evangelical Church

Robert G. Rayburn, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1980, 319 pages. \$8.95. Reviewed by Gordon Bietz, pastor, Collegedale, Tennessee.

If the service of worship in your church seems to be dry and perfunctory, failing to bring the congregation to a glorious experience of worship, and you don't really know what to do about it, Robert Rayburn's book *O Come, Let Us Worship* will stimulate your creativity. You won't agree with all his suggestions (especially on the sacraments), but you will be more thoughtful about what it means to gather as the body of Christ for worship. The book briefly outlines the theology of worship, and then each portion of the worship service is assessed.

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