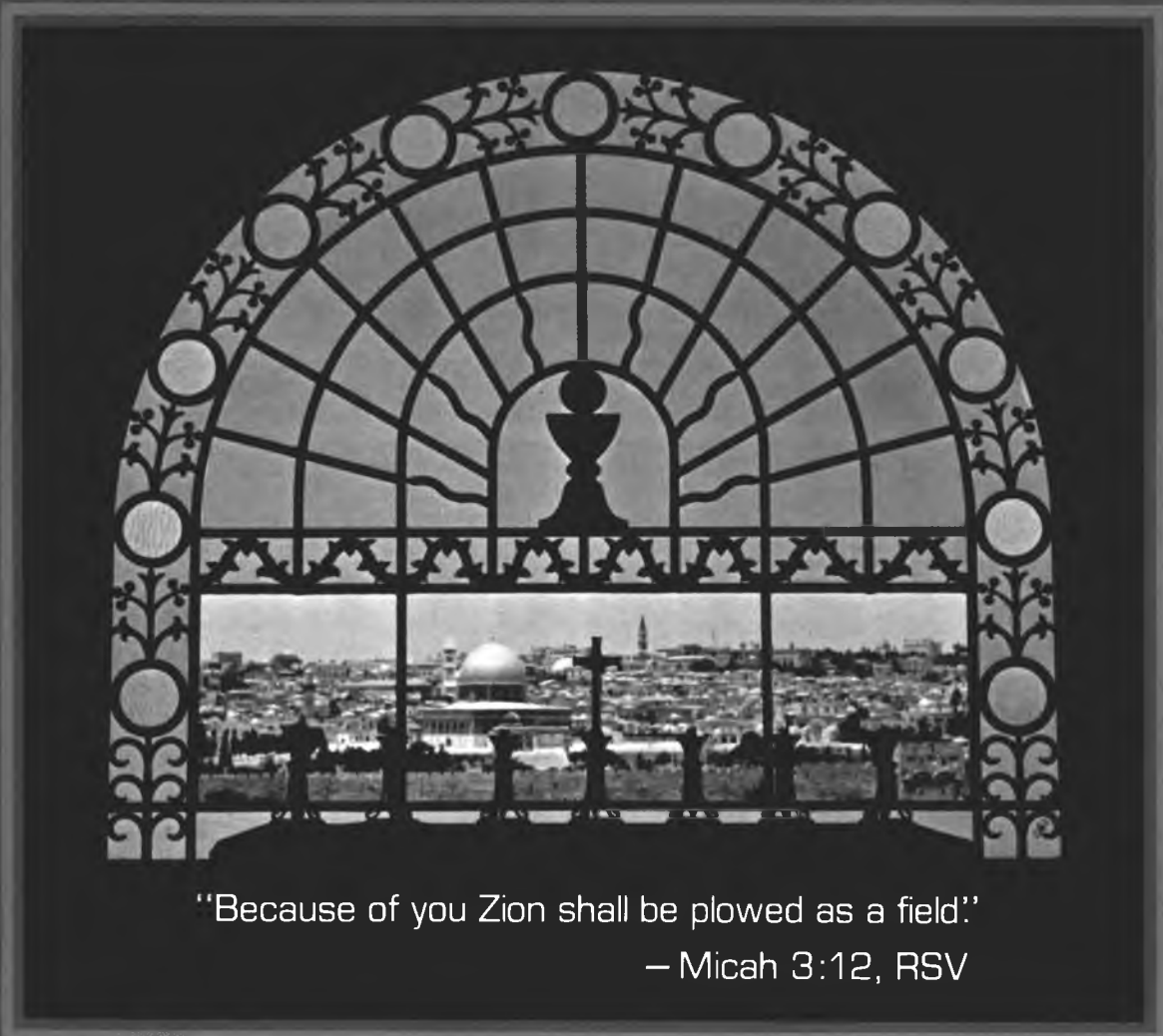


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THE PREACHER'S MAGAZINE



"Because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field."

— Micah 3:12, RSV

MICAH ON MAIN STREET	5
THE GREAT TEXTS OF MICAH	12
HOPE ALSO IN OUR TIME	16
WHERE DOES CONFESSION FIT IN?	32
EVANGELISM—THE RIGHT MIX	38
WHAT IS HOLINESS PREACHING?	46

Suitable for Framing

LAW'S LAWS FOR HOLY LIVING

1. To fix deep in my mind that I have one business upon my hands—to seek for eternal happiness by doing the will of God.
2. To examine everything that relates to me in this view, as it serves or obstructs this only end of life.
3. To think nothing great or desirable because the world thinks it so; but to form all my judgments of things from the infallible Word of God, and direct my life according to it.
4. To avoid all concerns with the world, or the ways of it, but where religion and charity oblige me to act.
5. To remember frequently, and impress it upon my mind deeply, that no condition of this life is for enjoyment, but for trial; and that every power, ability, or advantage we have are all so many talents to be accounted for to the Judge of the world.
6. That the greatness of human nature consists in doing nothing else but in imitating the Divine nature. That, therefore, all the greatness of this world, which is not in good actions, is perfectly beside the point.
7. To remember often and seriously how much time is thrown away, from which I can expect nothing but the charge of guilt; and how little there may be to come on which an eternity depends.
8. To avoid all excesses eating and drinking.
9. To spend as little time as I possibly can among such persons as can receive no benefit from me, nor I from them.
10. To be always fearful of letting my time slip away without some fruit.
11. To avoid all idleness.
12. To call to mind the presence of God whenever I find myself under temptation to sin, and to have immediate recourse to prayer.
13. To think humbly of myself and with great charity of all others.
14. To forbear from all evil speaking.
15. To think often of the life of Christ, and to propose it as a pattern for myself.
16. To pray, privately, thrice a day, besides my morning and evening prayer.
17. To spend some time in giving an account of the day previous to evening prayer: How have I spent this day? What sin have I committed? What temptations have I withstood? Have I performed all my duty?

—From *Christian Perfection*, by William Law



THE ARK ROCKER

LIKE LARD ON A PIG

Perhaps no area in the Christian life is as sensitive and difficult as walking humbly with God.

We may give easy lip service to its value. It's an admirable thing to do. We may even pray for humility and at the same time gloss over our willful ways and hard hearts with spiritually phony words about our great desire to be like Jesus.

"Pride grows in the human heart like lard on a pig," writes Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago*. Simple reading of Scripture reveals that it has always been so. Pride filled the heart of Cain and led him to murder his brother. The lengthy chronicle of Jacob's life is troubled with pride. Pride led Saul to consider his decisions more valid than the word of the Lord, and he lost the kingdom.

The Lord Jesus listed pride among the sins that defile a person (Mark 7:22-23). Pride and foolishness. The sins are related.

The apostle John wrote about "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16, RSV). Pride is the very heart of sin.

Pride is an old enemy. It deceives us. It is never more odious than when it wears a holy cloak. How many took the job, the church, the position they presently hold because it offers a stepping-stone to the next best place, and then have covered all the self-seeking desires of the heart with spiritual palaver about the Lord's will and serving Him?

Religious pride makes a pretense of humility. We learn how to manipulate all the pieces of life, and then speak in pious tones of our great trust in God.

The world's appetite for success has crept into the cracks and crevices in our own hearts. We have made the American corporate business pattern the model for the church. People become products or tools to be used in programs.

Decisions are pragmatic rather than based on principles, and there is little accountability beyond the final line where dollars and numbers are registered. When small whispers of doubt creep in, we say, "Well, it seems to work."

We are producing Christian leaders who handle relationships with an organizational chart, who can't reach across with compassion to another human being, who dare not feel, whose sense of well-being is based not on relationship to God but increasingly on position and power.

I am reminded of the conversation between the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman in *The Wizard of Oz*. The Scarecrow admitting he doesn't know enough because his head is stuffed with straw, tells the Woodman that he is going to the Wizard to ask him for some brains. The Woodman comments that brains are not, after all, the best thing in the world. "Once I had brains," he says, "and a heart also; so, having tried them both, I should much rather have a heart."

*He has showed you, O man, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you but
to do justice, and to love kindness, and to
walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8,
RSV)*

The Ark Locker

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IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL	
3	Holiness—Something to Make a Glorious Noise About <i>Wesley Tracy</i>
STUDIES IN MICAH	
5	Micah on Main Street <i>Russell Metcalfe</i>
8	And Now—Here's Micah <i>David L. Thompson</i>
11	Micah's Doctrine of God <i>Alvin S. Lawhead</i>
12	Preaching the Great Texts of Micah <i>H. Mark Abbott & William M. Boggs</i>
16	Hope also in Our Time <i>Harvey E. Finley</i>
18	Nothing like Us Ever Was <i>Wesley Tracy</i>
24	Monday Mornings with Micah <i>John B. Nielson</i>
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION	
30	The Heritage of the <i>Morning Star</i> <i>Tim White</i>
LENT	
32	Where Does Confession Fit In? <i>Philip Metcalfe</i>
EASTER	
35	Three Who Believed <i>John M. Gordon</i>
EVANGELISM	
38	Evangelism—The Right Mix <i>Charles Shaver</i>
STAFF MINISTRIES	
42	How to Avoid Staff Infection <i>Charles Mylander</i>
THE MINISTER'S MATE	
45	The Dream <i>CJ Stodola</i>
PREACHING	
46	What Is Holiness Preaching? <i>Richard S. Taylor</i>
WESLEYANA	
48	Unholy Tempers <i>George E. Failing</i>
CHURCH AND SOCIETY	
49	Cult, Occult, and Apostasy <i>Norman N. Bonner</i>
HERE'S HOW	
52	What Holiness Denominations Are Doing About Continuing Education <i>Mark R. Moore</i>
CONTEMPORARY SERMONS	
54	The Final Triumph of the Love of God <i>Alex Deasley</i>
THESE TOO	
Suitable for Framing—inside front cover; The Ark Rocker—1; The Preacher's Exchange—41; In the <i>Preacher's Magazine</i> 50 Years Ago—51; Sermon Outlines—57; Sermon Craft—58; Today's Books for Today's Preacher—60; Old Testament Word Studies—62; New Testament Word Studies—63.	

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Cover Photo by Heidi Weaver Ebelt. The Mosque of Omar, which stands on the site of the Temple in Jerusalem, viewed from the window of a chapel on the Mount of Olives. The chapel was built on the place where Jesus "wept" over the wayward city.

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by
Wesley
Tracy



HOLINESS—

Something to Make a Glorious Noise About!

When John Wesley, Adam Clarke, John Fletcher, and the other venerable Methodists of yore weren't speaking about holiness in a sermon, they were probably just leading up to it. They preached little else.

Right now I'm in the middle of writing a book about Adam Clarke's preaching. A study of his 64 extant sermons shows that he was a man with one message. He preached holiness all the time.

The reason that those Methodists turned the world upside down preaching holiness is not unrelated to the times in which they lived. They lived in the ebb tide of the Protestant Reformation. Still echoing across the Channel were Luther's teachings. Some which were "misappropriated" were:

1. Man is a horse. If he is ridden by God he is ridden to heaven. If he is ridden by the devil he is ridden into hell.

2. If on Sunday morning you see two men, one in a ditch, dead drunk from Saturday night revelry, and the other on his way to church with a Bible under his arm, there is no way to know which one is the Christian.

3. As far as sin goes, even the best Christian will have a Romans-seven struggle on his hands as long as he or she lives.

Meanwhile, from the mountains of Switzerland, Calvin was bugling all sorts of good news, like, "Sin is the instrument God uses to damn those He predestines to hell." When Beza seized this and set it in concrete, and later when it was decorated with the "tulip of Dort," a strange picture of the Christian life appeared.

By now, even the Westminster Confession, the creed of creeds, declared that even the regenerate would sin in word, thought, and deed as long as they lived. All this reduced the life of those with a religious turn of mind to seeking some sort of justification by faith (if they were so predestined)

and to search for some evidence of it in their lives. Their best religious leaders left them at the gate of justification.

There was nothing more to do but thank God for what He had done for them. Evangelism was rather beside the point with the ghost of predestination looming so ominously on the horizon. And since good works could not save them, Adam Clarke observed, they were content to have no good works at all. Further, how happy can you be, thinking that no matter how you yearn for holiness you must always be a slave to sin? In what ways was a person, even a Christian, different from a football kicked about at the whim of Satan and sin?

Into this malaise strolls John Wesley, Bible in hand, saying fearlessly to one and all that the tulip of Dort is a vile (or at least imperfect) flower, the Bible speaks of holiness of heart here and now. The Methodists expounded the Word, teaching that life-long slavery to sin was not the Christian's prospect. Carrying about a corrupt heart was not required; rather, it was forbidden. The springs of the soul, they said, can flow crystal clear and clean. The revival was on—people hungering for holiness, guided by pure doctrine, sought and found.

One of Adam Clarke's favorite ways of treating holiness was to tell believers that justification is what God has done *for* us, but you must now hear the Word about what God wants to do *in* us. He did not belittle justification (he called it the greatest miracle), but he stressed sanctification more—because it was the need of the hour.

Most moderns remember Adam Clarke only for his commentary, but he was also a great preacher. In an era of pulpit giants he "out-congregationed" them all. For 52 years he was one of the most listened-to preachers in Britain. In his sermon "Apostolic Preaching," he said, "Many talk much, and well, of what Christ has done *FOR* us: but how little of what He is to do *IN* us! . . . He was incarnated,

suffered, died, and rose again . . . FOR us, that He might reconcile us to God, . . . [and] blot out our sins." What God wants to do IN us, Clarke declares in the same sermon, is "wash the polluted heart, destroy every foul and abominable desire, all tormenting and unholy tempers . . . make the heart His throne, fill the soul with light, power, and life."

Man was not only "fearfully and wonderfully made" said Clarke, but he was also "fearfully and wonderfully vile."¹ "How is it that a nature so impure as ours can be purified from all unrighteousness? Why, by the Almighty Spirit. . . that Spirit is called the Holy Spirit because His office is to produce holiness in the nature of man. He pervades that nature—purifies and refines, and sublimates it to himself. He is given through the blood of the covenant for this very purpose. He comes to accomplish this great end . . . [so we can be] justified freely, and sanctified wholly."²

The Spirit purifies, indwells, and fills the consecrated heart, Clarke believed. The heart was filled with all the fullness of God, "emptied of sin . . . and filled with humility, meekness, gentleness, goodness, justice, holiness, mercy, truth, and love to God and man."³ "The heart in which Christ constantly dwells, He completely fills and holiness becometh His house forever."⁴

"What then is this complete sanctification? It is the cleansing of the blood that has not been cleansed—it is the washing of the soul of a true believer from the remains of sin—it is the making one who is already a child of God, more holy."⁵

"The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of burning, destroys the pollution of the heart,"⁶ and "the carnal mind [is] totally destroyed and the whole image of God restamped upon the soul."⁷ This "certainly points out a *deliverance from all sin* . . . and if this be fulfilled in man surely sin shall be eradicated from the soul,"⁸ for "the sanctifying Spirit . . . condemns to utter destruction the whole of the carnal mind"⁹ and for those who humbly seek Him the Spirit brings "the purification of their hearts from all evil tempers, passions, and appetites; so that they can love God with all their hearts, and worthily magnify His name, and love their neighbor as themselves."¹⁰

Are those forces which seemed to conspire against scriptural holiness in the days of Wesley and Clarke still afoot? It seems to me that the forces which make holiness of heart and life seem impossible, and thus unsought, have diversified and expanded, and are more subtle than ever. They are not only afoot, but quietly dominate the scene.

One such force is behavioristic or deterministic psychology. Those of the ilk of B. F. Skinner say that autonomous man is dead, and good riddance, he never existed anyway. Now we know that man is just conscious automata, a lump upon which the environment acts. This is a sort of secular Bezan Calvinism with no vertical dimension. And if we could truly see how this thought pattern saturates the *assumptions* of our society, we would be alarmed.

Another such force is the new humanism, typified by the human potential movement. It has become a

kind of secular Pelagianism with no vertical dimension. It spreads like poison ivy the idea that man is not sinful anyway. What an archaic notion—sin. Don't try to save people; there is really no sin to save them from.

John Wesley, Adam Clarke, and company had to overcome a world drenched in the ideas that sanctification came by penal suffering (purgatory) or in the hour and article of death. Those we must overcome have even more disturbing views. To the determinists, holiness is a mere amusing pun on human nature that is completely beside the point. To the new humanism holiness is a pitiable, not-quite-funny non-sequitur.

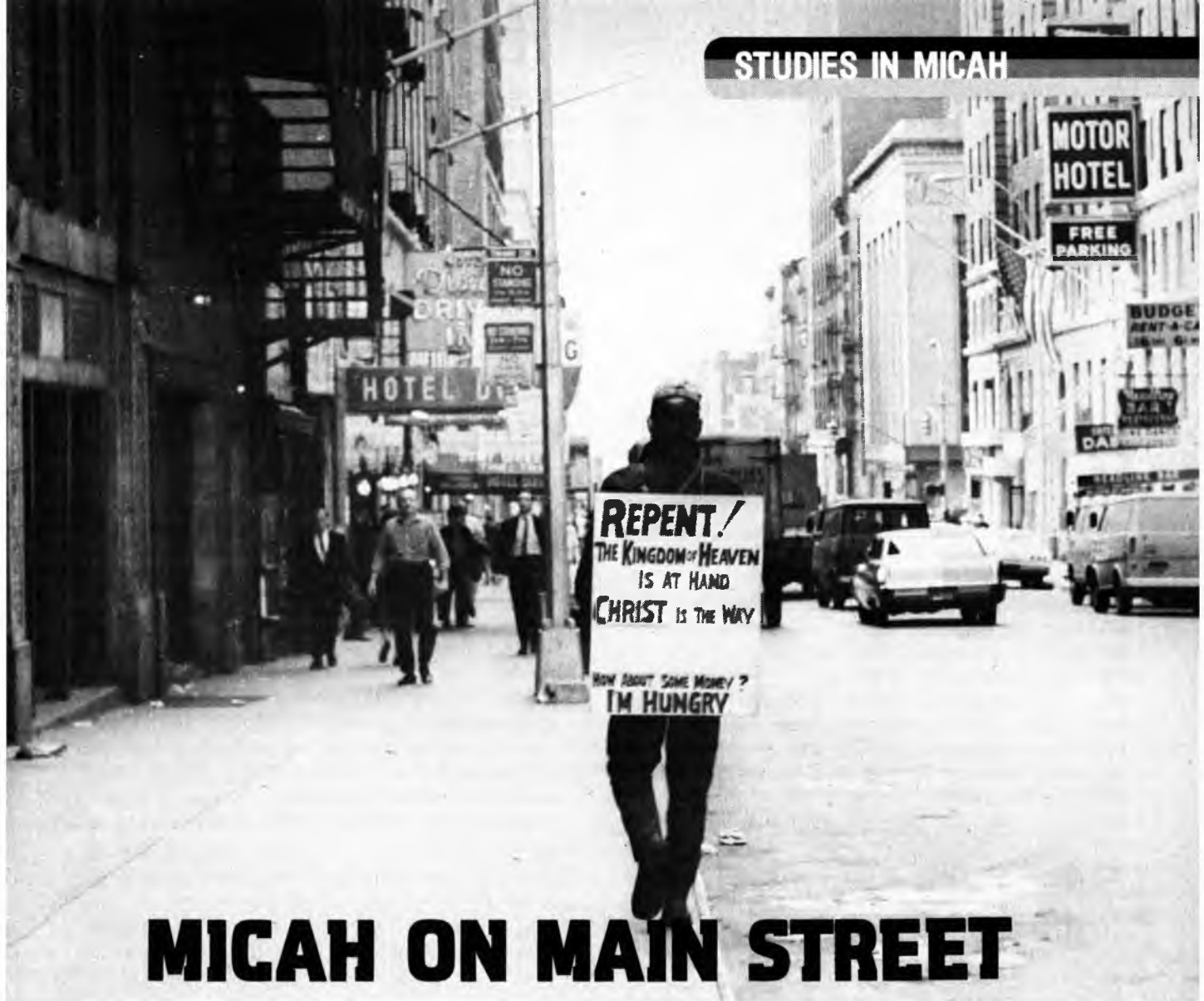
It seems to me that the challenge and need for preaching holiness, God's will IN us, has never been greater. Timing is so important in the movements of men. Holiness—has not her time returned? What do men and women need more to hear than that by God's grace, Christ's atonement, and the indwelling, purifying presence of Christ's Holy Spirit, the springs of the soul can flow crystal clear, clean, and pure?

What greater challenge for today, what higher honor than to have the privilege to preach full salvation? The mere thought is delightful. As we "celebrate Christian holiness" in our churches, we might become like the man Adam Clarke described who, during a preaching service, was so overwhelmed by the Spirit that he was "on the eve of making a glorious noise."

1. Adam Clarke, "The Love of God to a Lost World."
2. Clarke, "The Encouragement and Condescending Entreaty of God to Sinners."
3. Clarke, "The Family of God and Its Privileges."
4. Clarke, "Genuine Happiness the Privilege of the Christian in This Life."
5. Clarke, "The Family of God and Its Privileges."
6. Clarke, "Life, the Gift of the Gospel; Law, the Ministration of Death."
7. Clarke, "The Corruption That Is in the World Through Lust."
8. Clarke, "The Lord's Prayer."
9. Clarke, "The Design and Use of the Lord's Prayer."
10. Clarke, "The Plan of Human Redemption."

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MICAH ON MAIN STREET

by Russell Metcalfe.

Pastor, Wollaston Church of the Nazarene, Wollaston, Massachusetts

If the prophet Micah could slate revival services today he wouldn't have to change his sermon outlines very much. He could diagnose the spiritual needs of our contemporary world before lunch and prescribe the remedy before the afternoon coffee break.

His use of language would have to be somewhat adapted, for we cannot appreciate puns and word-play in Hebrew. But how Micah's style would fit us now! And if he couldn't use *his* native language to mock towns named for "beauty" and "boldness" that had actually become places of shame and fear, he could quickly adapt to *our* language and cry against cities named for "brotherly love" and "providence" that, like all our modern civilization, are filled with hatred and the forgetting of God.

And if Micah's masterful use of language fails to impress, his basic message is still communicated with embarrassing clarity. As Mark Twain dourly

observed, it is those portions of the Bible that cannot be misunderstood that disturb us. And Micah is a very disturbing voice.

The Message: Micah's Pulpit on Main Street

Micah's pulpit was never in an ivory tower. His treatment of sin was never theory, never just a diatribe against sin in the abstract. Rather, Micah spoke out against evil that had become incarnate. He spoke against specific sins of particular groups of people. His most scathing words were reserved for religious leaders who tailored their words for profit and popularity, a practice which anticipated the spirit of Jesus Christ. Micah seems to base his message on the thesis that our sins center in our religious deviation from simple obedience to God:

What is Jacob's transgression?

Is it not Samaria? What is Judah's

high place? Is it not Jerusalem? (1:5, NIV).

Social ills, Micah makes clear, begin when man makes religion serve his needs. Sin begins and ends in a wrong relationship to God, and then becomes manifest in wrong relationships to everything and everyone else.

The motives of false prophets are exposed with loathing and disgust:

"As for the prophets who lead my people astray, if one feeds them they proclaim 'peace'; if he does not, they prepare to wage war against him. Therefore night will come over you . . ." (3:5-6, NIV).

The vacuum that existed in the area of moral leadership was evidently being filled with horoscope-type advice and dabbling in the occult, more than superficially applicable on Main Street today:

"I will destroy your witchcraft and you will no longer cast spells" (5:12, NIV).

Micah would have little sympathy for "believers" who consult the daily horoscopes and dabble in the occult and superstitious.

Micah's treatment of the general moral climate of his day resonates with our concern for our own society; the general climate of immorality, of greed, of widespread covetousness, and of selfish, grasping materialism are objects of God's abhorrence and promised judgment:

Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! . . . They covet fields and seize them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance (2:1-2). " . . . her people are liars, and their tongues speak deceitfully. Therefore, I have begun to destroy you . . ." (6:12-13, NIV).

Micah promised God's judgment and His holy wrath. And in success-oriented, materialism-minded modern civilization such rugged proclamation can hardly be improved upon. It rings absolutely true to the eternal verities, even as it describes the results of selfishness that fouled Micah's neighborhoods, and corrupts ours today.

Micah blasted judges and rulers who let considerations other than plain truth influence their decisions.

. . . the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire—they all conspire together (7:3, NIV).

In our society where rich white people get away absolutely free with what poor non-whites would go to prison for, we can be assured that Micah would not merely shake his head quietly; he would speak out in no uncertain tones. Somewhat cynically some moderns might add that Micah did not have a church board setting his salary to act as a filter to see which truth should and which truth should not be preached.

A dark backdrop for a message of hope? A time when corruption is widespread—similar to our world today? So it would seem—and yet it was against this dark background that Micah, refusing to compromise in the least with evil, proclaimed with certainty a message of genuine confidence in the ultimate triumph of God and righteousness. But the key to Micah's confidence was not in man's power to change man's situation—but rather his confidence was in the integrity of God.

The Hope: Messiah Will Triumph

Micah's hope was a statement of faith in the very character of God. When man addresses the ills of society he begins his thinking with grandiose schemes for organized human assault on problems that are more often than not symptoms rather than causes. When man listens to God the focus and fury of his concern align with divine guidance in seeking and finding genuine redemption.

It wasn't that Micah would have been afraid to face police dogs or demonstrate against nuclear proliferation; it is just that he was looking in an entirely different direction for relief. He could see with the eye of faith a time when peace would overspread all the earth:

"The law will go out from Zion . . . Nation will not take up sword against nation . . . Every man will sit under his own vine . . . and no one will make them afraid" (4:2-4, NIV).

Micah's hope was not just in a future worldwide peace with prosperity and freedom from fear, but it was in a Person. His hope was that God himself would become Judge and Guide. The Prince of Peace would steal almost silently upon the scene:

" . . . you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel . . ." He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord . . . (5:2, 4, NIV).

But finally, Micah saw with the eye of faith, this Ruler would subdue all enemies and bring about a peace that would be eternal:

"I will take vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that have not obeyed me" (5:15, NIV).

Micah's confidence is in the integrity of a God who will not forever tolerate injustice, a God who keeps and guards His own people, and a God who is in control even when the moral battle seems lost. This is exactly where men of faith have always stood. And this is where men of faith must remain until the Prince of Peace returns.

Without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Heb. 11:6, RSV).

Even though written hundreds of years *after* Micah proclaimed his message, it was true then, and it could have been Micah's life-verse.

But perhaps the most important part of Micah's message on Main Street is the practical statement of God's personal requirement for His people. Living in the midst of evil and with a hope that seems to be far in the future. God's people are challenged to a simple, reasonable, but total allegiance.

The Standard: A Holy People

It is not particularly disturbing to listen to a preacher who is concerned about the ills of "society." It isn't too hard to get lost in an impersonal pronouncement about the evils of the day. But as we listen to Micah, an unmistakably personal note comes stabbing through. And it is a very disturbing note.

*He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God (6:8, NIV).*

And His requirements have not changed to this very day. These standards are the standards of a holy people.

God is concerned with what I do. Notwithstanding all the nonsense preached in the misapplication of the doctrine of salvation by grace, it matters, and it matters eternally what we *do*. No habitual neglect of justice meets God's requirements. Sinners do not inherit eternal life.


God is concerned with what I love—with *why* I do the things I do. Right actions spring from holiness of heart. God requires the right act for the right reason. And what we love is the basis upon which we shall hear the words—or not hear—"Well done, good and faithful servant!"

But both the "do" and the "love" and dynamic, and the heart of what Micah is trying to communicate is that we cannot do justice or love mercy apart from walking with our God. Morality apart from living faith in God is really immorality; the second half of the Decalogue cannot be kept apart from the first; the dynamic of holy living is in the relationship that man can have with God.

To "walk humbly with God" means a deliberate choice to agree with God by faith; to accept His diagnosis of our social ills, and to throw our full energy into His prescription for those ills. The prophet Amos amplified this: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

To "walk humbly with God" means also that there must be a deliberate change and adaptation on both God's and man's part in order that continuing fellowship can be reality.

God has stooped in love and mercy, and, far beyond even what Micah could comprehend, has stepped into our situation in the Person of Jesus. But God cannot fellowship with sin. And so man, by God's grace, may choose to be made clean and holy in order that this relationship may continue, and so that the dynamic for doing justice and loving mercy may constantly be renewed.

The only hope Micah saw for his people was a renewal and revival of personal holiness. "Walking humbly with God" is our only hope today for personal salvation, for directing our lives into any kind of real meaning, and our only hope for making any kind of impact on the people that are thronging our Main Streets. No Monastic retreat, or unholy compromise will do for our day. With Micah we must proclaim God's standard—holiness. Then and only then will God's people become the "dynamic difference" that will make Micah's hope reality. 

Two Books About Preaching the Old Testament Prophets

Something New, Something Old:

Something old, but classic and a must for every preacher is *Preaching from the Prophets*, by Kyle M. Yates (Broadman, 225 pp., **\$7.50**). This book gives intimate glimpses into political, social, and religious backgrounds which help the reader get better acquainted with 18 great prophets. Then for each prophet the author discusses the literary qualities and the profound spiritual values of the prophetic writings.

"The volume is a compendium of facts, stated in crisp compactness, but it is juicy with spiritual truths which spring eternal from

the utterances of these heroic forthtellers," says the *Dallas Morning News*.

"If a young preacher could afford only one book on the prophets, I think this should be the one purchased. Mature preachers, too, will find their minds stimulated as they go over familiar ground with Dr. Yates to point out things they have missed on previous journeys," the *Christian Century* asserts.

Yates gives 20 pages to the message of Micah, making this book a foundational aid to the theme of this issue of the *Preacher's Magazine*.

Something New: *Yesterday's Prophets for Today's World*, by F. B. Huey, Jr. (Broadman, 1980, 177 pp., **\$6.95**). This book, by an Old Testament professor at Southwestern Baptist Seminary, has nine chapters which present various aspects of the preaching of the Old Testament preachers of righteousness. The author aims at presenting these men as human, unique, and used of God. Huey says that one aim is to help the preacher start to understand the prophets and learn to think of them as friends he wants to know better and preachers with whom he shares a mission.

Both books available from your Publishing House.

And NOW—Here's MICAH

by David L. Thompson*

Authorship

A century and a quarter after Micaiah ben Imlah stood 400 to 1 against Ahab's state chaplains to declare God's word (1 Kings 22), God raised up a namesake of kindred spirit and courage, Micah the Morasthite (Mic. 1:1; 3:5-8), to preach to Samaria and Jerusalem in the latter decades of the eighth century B.C.¹ What is known of this great man must be extracted from the oracles bearing his name and from Jeremiah 26:18, the only reference to him outside of the book of Micah.

This contemporary of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah shared Amos's Judean peasant roots. His village home was Moresheth (1:1), probably Moresheth-Gath (1:14). If so, it lay 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem in the low hills linking the Philistine plain to the Judean highlands, situated on roughly the same latitude as Amos's village of Tekoa, 20 miles east on the other slope of those highlands.

Perhaps in part because of these common roots among Judah's little people, Micah shared Amos's utter disdain for the exploitation of the poor by greedy land-grabbers and crooked merchants and by rapacious (3:2) capital officials who should have taken justice as their very charge (Compare, e.g., Mic. 2:1-3, 8-10; 3:1-4; 6:6-8, 9-12; 7:1-6; with Amos 2:6-8; 3:10; 4:1; 5:11-12; 8:4-6). Like Amos, he was an incisive "biblical" preacher who brought the covenant law intelligently to bear on his own society.

Micah also shared Amos's charismatic credentials for ministry (compare Amos 3:8; 7:14-15). Though he spoke as a prophet, he is not so designated in the book. He self-consciously distinguished himself from the professional prophets, repudiating their "prophecy for profit" and claiming the Spirit of Yahweh himself and an attendant adequacy and sense of justice (3:5-8) as his sole credentials for

proclamation to Israel. If 7:7 refers to Micah himself, we have in addition an intimate glimpse of Micah's own faith in Yahweh in the face of deeply foreboding circumstances (7:1-6).

The question of authorship itself is not necessarily addressed in describing the man Micah. The work nowhere names the actual writer or compiler of the materials or dates that effort. It simply attributes the oracles gathered to Micah, without specifying the ways in which they derive from the prophet.

What we have in this book, as apparently in the other prophetic writings, is an anthology of the prophet's words, selected and arranged either by the prophet himself or by others in his spirit, or both. The fact that the book appears to have a literary design unrelated to a historical sequence supports this judgment. There is no *a priori* reason that all the oracles must relate to the prophet in the same way or must have been spoken directly by him.

Because of the minimal amount of information we possess about Micah, his times and full ministry, the student must proceed with great caution in the matter of authorship. We have a scant 223 lines of prophetic word out of what one would expect to have been a significant number of addresses, pre-



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sumably delivered orally over a period of 25 years or more, in widely varying circumstances.

For over a century many Old Testament scholars have been reluctant to grant the oracles of hope in 2:12-13; 4:1—5:8; and 7:8-20 as authentic sayings of Micah. This was based in part on Micah's own description of his mission as proclaimer of sin and ensuing judgment (3:8b). Furthermore, in Jeremiah's day a century later, Micah was still remembered as the prophet of doom who announced the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. 26:18). The reluctance stemmed also from the fact that some of the sayings foresee exile in Babylon (4:9-10) and appeared to assume the fall of Jerusalem of 587 B.C. (7:8-13), both of which seemed to indicate to some a late seventh century or exilic date to these critics.

In light of this situation any credible answer on authorship will of necessity involve the detailed examination and, where possible, the dating of each unit of the book. Granted our minimal knowledge of the varying situations in which the prophet spoke over the decades of his work, it appears unwarranted to deny Micah the possibility of uttering oracles of hope as well as doom, at least not solely on the basis of the contrasting motifs. The two themes are by no means mutually exclusive, as Micah's contemporary Hosea well demonstrates. As for the "Babylonian sayings," the well-known contact of Hezekiah's court with the Babylonian emissaries of Marduk-apal-iddina (biblical Mero-dach-baladan, 2 Kings 20:12-19; Isaiah 39) and the Assyrian use of Babylon as a deportation site already by Micah's time make it unwise to date these oracles to Jeremianic or exilic settings without further ado. In this writer's judgment, it is methodologically preferable to assume the materials belong authentically to Micah unless there is compelling evidence to the contrary.

The date of composition of the book as it now stands is difficult if not impossible to ascertain with certainty. And whether Micah himself or another is responsible for the literary structure of the work one cannot confidently say. But this writer sees no convincing, objective evidence for separating any of the materials from Micah the Morasthite, and finds no particular reason why Micah cannot have had significant influence on the shape of the work.²

Setting

Micah prophesied in the decades bounded by the reigns of the Judean kings Jotham and Hezekiah, 742 to 687/6 B.C. at the outside (1:1). The opening oracle, 1:2-7, announces Yahweh's appearance to smite the North Israelite capital of Samaria. It is thus to be set in the years before that city's fall to the Assyrians Shalmaneser V (726-722 B.C.) and Sargon II (721-705 B.C.) in 722 B.C. It may well have been the catastrophic disorder in Judah's northern neighbor and the increasingly evident inner decay that first stirred Micah to declare God's word to that decadent generation.

Thirty years earlier no one but the most perceptive (like Amos) could have foreseen the fate of

Samaria and Jerusalem. In a power vacuum, with Assyria momentarily unable to press to the Mediterranean lands, the strong kings Uzziah (Judah) and Jeroboam II (Israel) had led the twin kingdoms to prosperity and power reminiscent of the days of Solomon's glory.

But especially in Israel the appearance of strength was deceptive. Clear understandings of Yahweh's holy character and commitment to authentic covenant faith had long ago been forgotten in almost all levels of Israelite society. Covenant faith had been exchanged for Israelite civil religion, incorporating "the best" of Canaanite fertility worship (Hos. 2:4-13; Amos 2:7b-8) and natural patriotic fervor in an amalgam focused mainly on the perpetuation of life and government as is, certainly unable to foster strong character or moral resolve.

Confidence in the covenant's blessings had been retained (Amos 5:18 ff.; and Mic. 2:6-11; 3:9-11) in Judah, but little appreciation of the covenant's law as a mandate for society remained (Amos 2:4-8; Hos. 4:1-3).

Israel, and to some lesser degree Judah, was struggling with an economic revolution related in some ways to the altered moral consciousness. Smaller landholders, safeguarded before by covenant law now forgotten, were being increasingly forced to mortgage themselves and their families and finally to sell out to greedy land-grabbers, becoming slaves on their own land (Amos 2:6; 3:11; 8:6; and Mic. 2:2; 3:2 ff.).

The cultural-moral climate was not unlike our own and is perhaps best described in the pointed metaphors of the prophets who critiqued it. Hosea ridiculed the Israelite hot-pants jet set as like a red-hot oven (7:4 ff.) Israel, he said, was a half-baked cake without identity (7:8 ff.), a senseless dove lacking moral direction (7:11 ff.), and a treacherous bow (7:16). Amos styled the indulgent "dainty ladies" of Samaria as heifers (4:1). And Micah pictured Jerusalem's leaders as cannibals, devouring the people in their care (3:1-3). None of this "constituency" was eager to hear Micah's austere views of sin and right and judgment (Mic. 2:6-11).

The passing of the strong leaders Uzziah and Jeroboam, the arrival of the Assyrian presence in the person of the Napoleonic Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.), and the regrettable state of affairs just noted conspired to bring Israel to ruin by 722 B.C. and Judah to the brink of disaster only a few years later. Micah apparently began his ministry warning Samaria of impending doom and then, at the fall of that city, turned his attention to Jerusalem. Matters there, though not as far deteriorated as in Israel, were equally disturbing to him (1:8 ff.).

The moral and political anarchy of Israel's last days appears graphically in the string of assassinations which toppled three of her last five kings in 13 years, violence spawned largely over the issue of submission to Assyria.

It was in fact an attempt by Israel and Damascus to force Judah's king Ahaz to join them against Assyria that effectively opened Judah herself to

Assyrian influence repugnant to true worshippers of Yahweh. Unwilling to trust Yahweh for Judah's defense (Isaiah 7), Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings 16:1-9) who was only too happy to "help." The Assyrian responded by reducing Israel's territory by two-thirds and ravaging Damascus (734-732 B.C.). Ahaz preserved Judah, but at the cost of independence and with great moral compromise under pressure to incorporate Assyrian gods in Jerusalem's worship (2 Kings 16:10 ff.).

Not only so, but Ahaz's moral ineptitude succeeded in reversing whatever reforms his grandfather Uzziah had accomplished (2 Kings 16:2-4). Soon the denunciations of Israel by Amos and Hosea were more and more applicable to Judah (Micah, chapters 2, 3, and 6), evoking finally the prediction for which Micah was long to be remembered: "Zion shall be plowed like a field" (3:12 and Jer. 26:18).

By the time the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.) had vindicated the dire predictions of Amos, Hosea, and Micah, and the results of Ahaz' policies had become clear, Judah was ripe for reform under Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-8). There is evidence that Hezekiah's reforms, supported by the preaching of Micah and Isaiah, retarded the economic abuses that had plagued Israel. Whether actual spiritual reformation occurred in Judah is another question. Glib confidence in Yahweh's favor without understanding of the true character of God's people, which Micah denounced (3:9-11), could actually have resulted from superficial "reform."

Within 20 years of the fall of Samaria, Hezekiah himself was drawn into anti-Assyrian intrigues (2 Kings 20:12-15; 18:13-19:19), so that Judah suffered severe reprisals at the hands of Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.). Micah warned of this devastation in a lament, 1:8-16, sounding the death knell of Judean cities around his home region in poetry rich with sad wordplays. (See the notes in the NIV.)

Yahweh miraculously delivered Jerusalem from Sennacherib's forces as Isaiah promised (2 Kings 19:29-37). But it is probably a commentary on Micah's own audience that this deliverance was ultimately misunderstood as proof of God's unconditional commitment to Jerusalem and the Temple (Jer. 7:1-17).

Major Themes

Two of Micah's main concerns are (1) widespread departure from covenant law and (2) the coming judgment which he ties causally to that breach of faith (2:1-4; 3:1-4, 9-12; 6:1-12; 7:1-6; noting particularly the "therefore's" in 2:3; 3:12; 6:13). We have seen these already in Micah's denunciation of the rape of the poor. He is grieved both over the hurt suffered by these helpless ones when the law is not kept (3:1-3) and over the failure of responsible leadership which allows the travesty (3:1). He abhors the perversion of the very fibre of society, where men's good energies are consumed with evil (2:1-3; 3:9-10), where justice and right are swept away in a tidal wave of corruption and graft (3:9-11; 6:9-12; 7:2-6). The problem is not lack of information, he asserts, but rather rebellion (6:6-8).

A third major theme of Micah's is the moral poverty of the clergy. He is outraged by prophets and priests who are inspired more by shekels than by the shekinah (3:5-8), who cater to the whims of their sensual flock (2:6-11), more eager to gain a hearing than to declare God's ways (2:11; 3:8). They will share the judgment of their misguided hearers, says Micah. The prophet voices divine disgust heard already in Amos (4:4-5; 5:21-24) at exuberant religion abounding in Israel, religion that blithely mouths the old-time clichés but cannot whitewash the departure of vital faith and true godliness.

A fourth main theme of this great work stands in stark contrast to the first three. It is perhaps the point of the book as it now stands: the Kingdom will come and God's Word and worship will yet be established among His people. Divided by three recurring "hears" (1:2; 3:1; and 6:1), the book progresses as follows through alternating sections of judgment and hope, climaxing in a liturgy of faith (7:8-20).

1:2—2:11 Capital's Doom Announced
and Supported

2:12-13 Remnant to Be Retrieved

3:1-12 Rulers and Prophets Indicted

4:1—5:15 Yahweh's Rule, Now and Then

6:1—7:7 Yahweh's Case Against Israel

7:8-20 Hope in Incomparable Yahweh

In these oracles for a people far from Yahweh's law, there is promised hope that both they and the nations will one day walk in God's ways, with Zion a veritable fountainhead of Yahweh's law (4:1-5). For a nation bound to go into captivity, if not now surely sometime, redemption and return are offered (2:12-13; 4:6-10; 5:7-9). Downtrodden Judah is promised victory (4:11—5:9). A nation beset with faltering leadership is promised a Bethlehemite who will "be great to the ends of the earth" (5:1-6).

The final theme undergirds the entire work theologically, though it surfaces explicitly only in the concluding doxology. It is the theme of Yahweh's incomparable grace (7:18-20). It is Yahweh's own character which substantiates both the predictions of doom and the promises as well. Yahweh's unspeakable compassion parts the clouds and brings hope. The remnant to be retrieved from the lame and afflicted (2:12-13; 4:6-7) will be a work of His grace. And His steadfast love will cast Israel's sins "into the depth of the sea" (7:18-20). This prophet was more than a disenchanting peasant, railing against a society gone astray. He was a man seized with the grandeur of Yahweh himself. Micah, indeed — "Who Is like Yahweh!"



FOOTNOTES

1. Micah is a shortened form of the name Micaiah, "Who is like Yahweh," parallel in form to the name Michael, "Who is like El/God."

2. Consult the standard critical commentaries and Old Testament introductions for detailed discussions of these matters. Especially helpful because they present full summaries from varying perspectives are R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1969); Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Harper and Row, 1965); and most recently J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Westminster, 1975). See especially Leslie C. Allen's cogent argument for the Micah origin of almost the entire anthology in *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, The New International Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 241-53.

Micah's Doctrine of God

by Alvin S. Lawhead*

Since the Book of Micah is among the minor prophets, one might reasonably assume that any specific doctrinal study confined to this book might suffer from a paucity of material. However, such is not the case. The name *Micah* means "who is like Yahweh?" and as James L. Mays remarks,

The name is appropriate for a book whose range reflects the greatness of God. It is difficult to imagine a document which could offer in seven chapters a more comprehensive testimony to YAHWEH. . . . God speaks and is described as God of Israel and of the nations, Judge and Savior, majestic in wrath and astonishing in compassion, worker of justice and promiser of forgiveness. He scatters his people and collects them as his flock; he destroys Zion and "resurrects" her; he threatens the nations with humiliation and offers them peace.¹

Within this comprehensive testimony to God there is ample material to set forth a clear picture of Micah's doctrine of God.

In the opening oracle in 1:2-6, **the righteous God condemns sin.** God's wrath against sin is always based upon his **holiness**, and this oracle is reminiscent of the revelation of that holiness at Mount Sinai with such descriptive elements as the earthquake and fire. God is also described as coming forth—not so much leaving a particular place as going forth for a particular purpose, such as war against an enemy. God comes forth to display his holy displeasure with sin, and this judgment begins at the house of God.

But God is never arbitrary in his judgment of sin. It is neces-

sary to bear in mind that Micah (along with the other prophets of the eighth century B.C.) speaks out against a background of over 500 years of broken covenant on the part of God's people. These prophets major on doom and judgment as expressions of the curses incurred by a lack of faithfulness to the covenant stipulations and relationships. Thus there is in Micah's understanding of God an absolute demand for covenant faithfulness expressed in two dimensions—a vertical dimension of relationship with God and a horizontal dimension of relationship with others within the covenant community.

God's people are unquestionably guilty of unfaithfulness in their covenant relationship with God. Micah employs the familiar covenant lawsuit pattern in a classic expression found in 6:1-5. The basic purpose of this indictment of Israel is found in verse 5, ". . . that you may know the saving acts of the LORD" (NIV), with the implication that they do not remember. The miraculous deliverance from Egypt and the protection and blessing provided until the entrance into Canaan are irrefutable proofs of God's faithfulness in the covenant relationship. By contrast the unbelievable unfaithfulness of Israel is implied by the astonishing cry of incredulity in verse 3, "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you?" (NIV) Thus the righteous God has a controversy and contends with Israel.

The horizontal dimension of Israel's sin concerns relationships between neighbors within the covenant community. As the champion of the poor Micah is particularly incensed by the spectacle of the rich oppressing the poor, and his repeated demand for justice and fairness is a re-

flection of God's displeasure with this particular manifestation of Israel's sin.

It is the glaring lack of justice (*mišpat*) which calls forth God's condemnation. As used here, justice carries far more meaning than our limited forensic understanding. It is part of Israel's ethical vocabulary and is the equivalent of loving one's neighbor. James L. Mays says that *mispat* is "the tradition of values and guidelines which govern conduct in economic and social affairs and the declarations of the courts of elders and heads who managed this realm of life."² This consideration was lacking in Israel's national life because of unrestrained materialistic self interests such as coveting fields and houses and seizing them (2:2); ignoring common respect for persons (3:2-3); accumulating treasures of wickedness (6:10); lying in wait for blood and hunting a brother with a net (7:2); and most appalling of all, prophets and priests selling their services (3:5, 11). One is reminded of Jesus' statement of principle that you cannot serve God and mammon.

With this complete breakdown in the spiritual performance of Israel the only course of action left open to God is that of judgment. **The nature of God is unchanging** and holiness in heart relationship with God and in life's relationships with others has ever

(Continued on page 29)



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PREACHING THE GREAT

by H. Mark Abbott, Pastor, Houghton Wesleyan Church, Houghton, Nev

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Text: Mic. 6:1-8

Introduction

Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, was concerned that Judah was headed for the same catastrophe the Northern Kingdom had experienced in 722 B.C. Thus his book includes heavy doses of divine judgment and God's requirements for His people. Micah was thus addressing religious people, a people whose religion was replete with liturgy, formal observance, and multiplied sacrifices.

Exposition of the Text

The first verses of Micah 6 present the Lord's case against His people. He has an accusation to lodge against them (vv. 1-2). It is an accusation that, despite His history of gracious acts (vv. 4-5), His people had become weary of Him (v. 3).

Verse 6 seems to begin a series of hypothetical counter-challenges by the people. In response to God's accusation of failing Him, they hypothetically respond;

What does God really want from us?

Does He want burnt offerings or sacrifices of oil?

Does He even desire human sacrifice?

In other words, "Is there some kind of sacrifice which will satisfy You, God?"

The familiar verse 8 is the Lord's answer. In it Micah cites three things God does require.

1. He requires that they "*do justice*." The prophet complains bitterly about the injustices of his day. There was oppression (2:1-2), marketplace dishonesty (6:10-11), violence (6:12a; 7:2), and the leaders accepted bribes and dealt corruptly (3:11). These characteristics offended a God of justice.

2. He requires that they "*love kindness*." The great Hebrew word used here is difficult to translate simply. The RSV footnotes it "steadfast love." "Mercy" is the NIV rendition, while NASB footnotes it "loyalty." It refers to an attribute of God—an unconditional, faithful love to all mankind, and particularly those in covenant relationship with Him. This quality is also to characterize the servant of God. We too are to love faithfulness, mercy, loyalty, steadfast love, and seek to demonstrate these graces in our lives.

To demonstrate this divine attribute is to love unconditionally (Luke 6:32-35), to love actively, (1 John 3:18) and to love faithfully or loyally (Gal. 5:22).

3. God requires that they also "*walk humbly*" with Him. The Hebrew can be translated "walk carefully" or "circumspectly."

This is the life of careful, personal piety, which was in contrast to the merely formal, external religiosity which often characterized Micah's day. Though religious cere-

monies were not being rejected *per se*, the prophets clearly indicate that they are worthless unless accompanied by personal devotion and commitment (Isa. 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24).

Theological and Personal Application

What then does God require?

Not the "easy believism" so often propagated in contemporary evangelical circles;

Not the "cheap grace" sometimes practiced;

Not the segmenting of life into "secular" and "sacred";

Not the juxtaposition of "social gospel" versus "spiritual gospel."

What God requires is the commitment of life in all its dimensions to an obedience to a God of love, holiness, and justice. As the commentator, James Mays, has put it: "It's you, not something God wants" (*Micah*, p. 136). This involves not only the personal spirituality and loving relationships, which evangelicals tend to emphasize most, but also just acts, along with a quest for justice in the world.

New Testament Correlation

New Testament correlation for this text is found in the entire Epistle of James. There the writer also emphasizes God's concern for personal spirituality (James 4:1-10), loving relationships (James 1:19, 20, 26; 2:8) and especially for just acts (2:1-9, 14-18). In fact, the New Testament counterpart to Micah's combination of spiritual and social concerns is James 1:27 with its definition of "pure religion."

Suggested Outline

The message could follow a Question-Answer format

I. *The Question*—What do you want, God? Services of worship? Sacrificial offerings?

II. *The Answer*—This is what I want—All of you.

A. Walk humbly with God.

B. Love kindness.

C. Do justice.

Possible Illustrative Materials

Regarding God's desire for total commitment of our whole selves:

On one occasion when a preacher was making a stirring appeal for a sacrificial love offering for mission work, all present were moved to give liberally. In the congregation, however, was a little boy whose heart had been deeply touched by the preacher's words. Yet he had no money to give. His distress grew more acute as the offering plate drew nearer, until suddenly he seemed at peace. To the amazement of the usher who handed the plate to him, the boy placed it on the floor and stood in it. He gave himself to the Lord.



TEXTS OF MICAH

William M. Boggs, Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene, Los Angeles, California

Regarding the combination of spiritual and social concerns:

According to Donald Dayton, the early Wesleyan Methodists "tested the spirituality of a church by its commitment to reform but refused to substitute reform for piety . . . Wesleyans often spoke of the conjunction of piety and radicalism, claiming to excel in both areas" (*Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*, p. 77).

"Contemporary stereotypes are shaken by the realization that the major financial backing and organizational leadership behind the abolitionist crusade derived from the man who founded Dunn and Bradstreet (the Wall Street credit rating firm) and his silk merchant brother. Lewis and Arthur Tappan were two of the most prominent and wealthy businessmen in pre-Civil War New York. Yet these two men so threw themselves into the reform movements of the era that one tribute after Arthur's death affirmed that, 'In the slavery agitation, its beginning, its extent, its power, its results, it may be said without a question that Arthur Tappan was the pivotal center of the whole movement'" (Dayton, p. 63).

—H. Mark Abbott

HOW GOD DEALS WITH SIN

Text: Mic. 7:18-20

Introduction

While Micah begins with a portrayal of God's wrath, his prophecy concludes with praise of divine mercy. God's forgiveness and mercy would in the future be evidenced in the restoration of His people, following their years of exile.

It is suggested that these verses are a hymn to be sung by a congregation. In fact, these words are read annually by Jewish worshippers on the Day of Atonement.

In Exod. 34:6-7, after the sin of Israel, God revealed himself to Moses in much the same light. He is the God who, in mercy, deals with sin in justice, but also with forgiveness.

Exposition of the Text

The text moves from a discussion of what God is like (verse 18) to what God does (vv. 19-20). The outline of a message might well follow these clear thematic divisions of the passage.

I. What Is God Like?

A. He is *incomparable*, as suggested by the rhetorical question which opens verse 18. The very name of the prophet means "Who is like Yahweh?" "Who is a God like Thee?" There is none who pardons iniquity,

none who passes over transgression, none who predominates in mercy, not wrath. (See also Neh. 9:17, Pss. 86:15; 103:8, 145:8; Jonah 4:2.)

There is none other whose basic character is forgiving love, and who thus can deal justly, but also in mercy, with our sins.

B. He is also *unchanging* in steadfast love.

Here again is the great Hebrew word of Mic. 6:8, referring to the divine attribute of unconditional, faithful love to all mankind and particularly those in covenant relationship with himself.

It is thus His incomparably forgiving nature and His unchangingly steadfast love which we face when we repent of our sins.

II. What God Does

At least three activities spring from the divine attributes.

A. He will have *compassion on us*.

"Compassion is the tender care lavished by a stronger on the need of one who is related to him in some way" (James Mays, *Micah*, p. 168).

B. He will *deal with our sin*.

Three Old Testament words for sin—iniquity, transgression, and sin—are used to encompass the totality of the problem. The phrases pile up in the passage in description of God's gracious dealings with man's basic problem. He "pardons . . . passes . . . treads underfoot . . . casts into the depths of the sea."

C. He will *demonstrate steadfast love and mercy*.

The recipients of God's steadfast love and mercy are the representative Jacob and Abraham. To these two God had entered into a covenant oath which could be depended on and which influenced all of God's people.

Theological and Practical Application

Though God is a Being of justice, expressed in wrath, as amply illustrated in the rest of Micah, He is at heart a God of forgiveness, who desires to deal with the sin which offends His justice and separates Him from mankind. Even when He judges, it is in love, particularly with those to whom He is bound in covenant relationship. It is judgment with a view to restoration.

New Testament Correlation

The centrality of divine love is expressed in 1 John 4:8; the steadfastness of His love in Romans 8:33-36; and His predisposition to forgive in 1 John 1:7-9. The Cross, where Jesus, the Son of God, became the Sin Offering, fulfilling both the just demands of God's law and His love, is the epitome of how God deals with sin.

Potential Illustrative Materials

Quote from Leslie Weatherhead, *Prescription for Anxiety*, p. 72:

"The forgiveness of God is in my opinion the most powerful therapeutic idea in the world."

Once Lincoln was asked how he was going to treat the rebellious Southerners when they had finally been defeated and had returned to the Union. The questioner expected that Lincoln would take a dire vengeance, but he answered, "I will treat them as if they had never been away." It is the wonder of the love and forgiveness of God that He treats us like that.

—H. Mark Abbott

"WHEN LIFE COLLAPSES, HOPE REMAINS"

Text: Mic. 5:2

The writer of this text is a man who lives in the midst of great catastrophe. His country is defeated, cities are being destroyed, the countryside is being pillaged, the nation's leadership is being taken into exile.

This chapter begins with this claustrophobic pronouncement: "Strengthen your walls, O walled city, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod" (NIV). As you read the Book of Micah, the overwhelming sense of anguish and suffering comes through again and again: pain like "a woman in labor" (4:9, NIV); "Zion will become plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill an overgrown mound" (3:12, NIV); God has "planned a disaster against this people, from which they cannot save themselves" (2:3, NIV).

The prophetic message for this situation is bleak indeed! It is filled with the sense of divine punishment for the sins of the nation. These sins chronicled in Micah have been summarized as follows:

1. Oppression of the poor (2:2, 8-9; 3:1-4)
2. Unscrupulous use of power (2:1f.; 3:10)
3. Lack of integrity (6:12; 7:2-6)
4. Reckless scorn of religion (3:5-8; 5:12-14)
5. False prophets (3:5, 7, 9-11)
6. Greedy corruption in church and state (7:3)

This was a tarnished time for people whom God had so miraculously delivered from Egypt and so graciously established in their land.

But our text sparkles with hope. It is set in the midst of sinful pronouncements, military destruction, and religious confusion. But the prophet is able to see beyond the gloom of the present predicament to a new kingdom of the redeemed. He is able to interpret divine activity in the exile and see an opportunity for the evangelization of other nations through the efforts of the dispersed Israelites.

Bethlehem is singled out as the geographical center for God's redemptive activity. We know from 1 Sam. 17:12 that it was the birthplace of David. The author marvels at what a great movement came from such a small place. From this obscure village came a line of kings who ruled Judah for almost 500 years. The Davidic reign is viewed as the Golden Era of Judah. In prophetic language, David becomes the prototype for the coming Messiah. There emerges a strange mixture of nostalgic longing for the good old days and hopeful anticipation for the coming Day of the Lord.

Just as tiny Bethlehem was once the spark by which God ignited the destiny of Judah, Micah hopes for the time when God will again send a mighty deliverer to His people, and "restore the former dominion" of kingship (4:8, NIV).

The New Testament book which quotes this passage as foretelling the birthplace of the Messiah is Matthew. This was important to Matthew's primarily Jewish audience. He points out that even the birthplace of Jesus is consistent with Jewish prophecy and the fulfillment of God's redemptive promises to the nation. As Augustine so aptly phrased it, "The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed."

We are given a beautiful illustration of the implacable commitment of God to carrying out His purposes in history. God cannot be thwarted by sin, captivity, or military superiority. We may grow impatient and complain, but He moves constantly and consistently to the time when all people live under His reign in humility and surrender.

One of the finest preaching resources for Micah (or any other prophet for that matter) is Kyle Yates's *Preaching from the Prophets*. Yates has this to say about the passage: "Little Bethlehem is to be signally honored in the coming of the Anointed One who [is to] stand and feed his flock, gather the residue of his brethren, establish them by divine power and universal influence, protect them from the nations, make them a supernatural influence among many peoples, remove the love of militarism and idolatry from them, and establish His name among them forever."

Yates continues, "This picture of a divine Conqueror is to find its fulfillment in the Christ who won His victories not by might, or by power, but by His Spirit. He came as a lowly babe from remote Bethlehem to bring salvation to a world so sorely in need of a Saviour. When the Wise Men came to Jerusalem seeking the new King they were guided to Bethlehem by this seven hundred year old word from Micah (cf. Matt. 2:6; John 7:42). To that little city came the highest event and the holiest personality in all Israel's history."

Resources for Study

My Servants the Prophets, Edward J. Young, Eerdmans
Radical Voices in the Wilderness, Robert Sanders, Word.

Preaching from the Prophets, Kyle Yates.

Sermon Suggestions

Your sermon will want to emphasize the certainty of God's purpose and His steadfastness even in the midst of chastisement. This is the source of hope for the Christian whose life collapses. Beyond the pain of the present moment is the redemptive activity of God.

Even though some believe this passage was originally written concerning the birth of David, the New Testament tells us it is wonderfully fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, who is the ultimate grounds for our hope.

We must clarify the Christian hope and disassociate it from the easy optimisms that may mislead it. We have believed in something called progress. We are not sure just what it means, but it is a nice word, pleasant to think about. It makes us feel better to think that everything is getting better and better, that we are living in a higher movement unfolding like an upward escalator and thus the march of progress is inevitable. We have no business putting our hopes in the illusions of this world or losing our hope when man-made dreams turn out to be deceptive.

Where should our hope be placed? The Psalmist stands with us and with Micah when he reflects, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God" (Psalm 42:5).

Illustrations

1. Do you know that a pearl is formed when a grain of sand inbeds itself in the mantle of an oyster? And because

the oyster is irritated it secretes a milky fluid that coats the grain of sand that is irritating it and makes it bearable. Hope is the substance of the pearl given off because there is a problem, or a dissatisfaction, or an immediate failure, and he coats it and makes life bearable that would otherwise be unable to endure. If hope dies, there is no reason for our strivings.

2. Karl Barth tells a story about a man who was a prisoner of war during World War II. For years he was held captive in a POW camp and cut off from any communication with his family. He didn't know if they were alive or if they were dead: if they were waiting for him or if they had been carried away. And as the years wore on, slowly, a piece at a time, the man began to die. Not from any external circumstances, but rather from an internal condition, until finally, after several years of slowly wasting away, just at the verge of dying, there came a letter one day. Grimy and soiled from being passed from hand to hand, the letter had no return address, but simply the man's name, and as he opened it the letter said, "We are alive. We love you. We are waiting for you." His family had signed it. Suddenly his circumstances were turned around, and he was able to survive because there was kindled within him a hope that beyond his immediate circumstance there was a reason for hopefulness. Now in just such a way as Christians we have a letter that we have received. It says, "I am alive. I love you. I am waiting for you."

—William M. Boggs

"THE VIGILANT FAITH"

Mic. 7:1-7

Understanding the Text

This passage begins with an illustration of a man who visits the orchard after the harvest is concluded. He searches in vain for good fruit, but "there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs" he craves (7:1, NIV). In despair he observes, "The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains" (7:2, NIV). The prophet Jeremiah will later begin a similar vigil, in search of a righteous man (Jer. 5:1).

But Micah is completely disappointed. The season that blossomed Israel's morality is over. The ethical fruit so pleasing to the Lord of the vineyard has disappeared. In its place there is a pervasive corruption where "the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire" (7:3, NIV). The power structure of politicians, judges, and leaders collaborate against the helpless victims of the country. Even the best leaders are no better than a bribe.

There is apparently a complete loss of confidence in the morality of the government. This great tearing of the moral fabric is producing a "time of great confusion" (7:9, NIV).

This disintegration has produced a rampant paranoia that even suspects friends and family. But Micah remains a firm advocate for justice. His belief in justice is firmly rooted in what he believes about God. The heart of his message is found in the preceding passage, "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly before God" (6:8, NIV). Micah clearly believes in the activity of God in history, and the mercy of God towards man. But he also calls for a response that is demanded of man. There is a demanding claim that our faith lays upon us.

Robert Sanders points out, "In his own mind, he is making an appeal to the only real standard there is for justice. It is not a standard that has evolved in the course of history as mores and conventions. It is a standard rooted in the very nature of God. In God all justice is

rooted and grounded and issues forth from him as revelation to man. God deals fairly with men and they are to deal fairly with one another."

It is this firmly grounded faith in the nature of God's mercy and its demand for a just human response that keeps Micah vigilant for the salvation of God to draw near. "But as for me, I keep watch for the Lord; I wait in hope for God my Savior; my God will hear me."

Resources for Study

**Radical Voices in the Wilderness*, Robert Sanders, Word. *The Interpreter's Bible*.

Sermon Suggestions

Your sermon must deal with the consistent sense of injustice present in this passage while emphasizing God's expectation for Christians to be deeply committed to bringing about a just society. Our own society is familiar with the tone of despair that this passage creates. With Three Mile Island reminding us that our nuclear rose has thorns and Watergate echoing that the land of the free and the home of the brave may become the land of the spree and the home of the knave. Americans have learned about the illusions of manmade dreams.

One struggle for you will be to formulate a definition of justice. The preceding passages and especially the key verse in 6:8 affect this pericope and should be included in the sermon. The most preachable text seems to be 7:7.

Above all, show your people the reasonableness of God's requirements, the unchangeable demands He makes of the committed disciple, and the dependability of His salvation purposes. This will produce a vigilant faith in them.

Illustrations

Suppose you met a person on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River near New York City who was obviously a stranger and who didn't know where he was. Suppose also, that he wanted to go to New York City, but that he was not sure of the direction. At the moment he was walking towards Newark, in the opposite direction. You would tell him to turn around. "Do you see that building looming up over the horizon? That's the Empire State Building. That's the constant element that's fixed. Walk in that direction and you will finally get to New York City."

—William M. Boggs



HOPE ALSO IN OUR TIME

by Harvey E. Finley*

"Life is not worth the living" or "Stop the world, I want to get off"—these or similar expressions of deep dissatisfaction and despair are often heard in these times. They are typical expressions of those who have pursued to the limit a self-centered, pleasure-seeking way of life constantly paraded before us in media advertisements and programs, as well as in many other ways. These are thoughts expressed by persons who experience a gnawing void of meaninglessness deep in the caverns of their souls, for such thoughts result when there is no hope.

Preachers of the Word of God have always had reasons to proclaim that any nation which forgets God or fails to give God due place in individual or national life travels the road to destruction (see Ps. 9:17). In this regard there are also an increasing number of analysts of the international scene who for various reasons are warning not only of the decadence of Western Civilization, but its threatened demise. They see the Soviet's plans for global conquest proceeding on schedule, perhaps ahead of schedule.

Concerning the present international scene, Western Civilization in its earlier history gave significant place to the Bible and biblical-based values, but in recent times millions identified with Western Civilization have, by and large, cast aside the Bible and its values for living. In doing this, they have in effect cast God aside too. Thus there has been a significant turning away from God to pursue a godless, self-serving way of living.

In comparable previous instances, as the case with ancient Israel in Micah's time, God used a pagan, wicked nation as the "rod of His anger" to bring judgment upon Israel, who on some counts would have been consid-

ered more righteous than the destroying nation (see Isa. 10:5-6; Hab. 1:5-13). It is therefore difficult not to hear prognostications rather frequently made concerning the current international scene.

Considering trends that are dominant in the world, the future presents a very bleak prospect in the mind of many, including, no doubt, a surprising number of Christians. The question which may well be on minds during these times is perhaps: What does the future really hold for us, and wherein lies our hope? The purpose of this article is to set forth hope as it may be perceived through Micah who lived also in bleak, dismal days.

I. Hope Grounded in God's Faithfulness

Many in Micah's time, as well as in ours, probably felt strongly that the wicked should receive their due, that God indeed should pour out His wrath to the destruction of the wicked and their ways. However, the problem with Micah's listeners and also with his "Christian" readers today is that of properly identifying the wicked upon whom the judgment of God should fall. Now in Micah's speaking about judgment with its consequent destruction, what does he have to say to us that has direct or indirect bearing on having hope?

A. Identifying and Denouncing Causes of Hopelessness

It may be asserted without ar-



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gument that God has never intended for men and women to live without hope. It is therefore to be understood that when a person or a people do not have hope there are reasons for the lack of it, this lack having its opposite—hopelessness. This is to say that just as hope arises out of a certain manner of living, so hopelessness follows as the result of a certain but different manner of living.

The first step in moving toward having hope is that of identifying and denouncing that which robs a person or a people of hope. Micah was moved by the Spirit of God to speak forthrightly and specifically about causes of hopelessness and despair of his time.

This history of man in going his sinful way has been that of not merely disregarding God's laws but also of manifesting arrogance even defiance by his behavior before God. This kind of behavior arises out of forsaking God for other gods and shows itself in various destructive ways, as Micah and his older contemporaries knew all too well (see also Amos 2:4-8; 3:13-4:5; Isa. 5:8-25).

Since the history of Micah's time was that primarily characterized by rebellion and defiance before God, Micah was called to point out to the people of his day that the many wicked deeds of their lives provoked God to anger. He also realized the close tie between their evil ways and their hopelessness and despair. Further, he denounced specific sins in the hope that eyes would be opened to see these sins as the cause of their having no hope.

The list of sins Micah denounced is a shocking list in view of the fact that his nation understood itself to be the people of God.

First, he denounced the complete flip-flop of values (3:2a) which was expressed in a number of ways: devising schemes to impose severe economic oppression on the struggling poor (2:1-2); abhorring justice and perverting judgment or decisions in the courts (3:6); building political power through bloodshed (3:10).

Second, he denounced trust in

horses and chariots, this going hand in hand with a backslidden condition (see 5:10-11). Like Isaiah, he stressed that trust should be wholly in God, not in what has been made by man nor in dependence on man.

Third, he denounced the manner in which their rituals and ceremonies had become a formalism, with no redeeming or life-changing impact on them (see 6:6-7). He was moved, then, to state what God's requirements really are (6:8), and to show how different from what they had substituted for them.

Fourth, he denounced their outright idolatrous worship (5:10-15).

Finally, he was led to declare the sure judgment of God upon his sinful fellowmen. He made it clear that his people, his nation, would experience devastation and destruction at the hands of a pagan, ungodly nation (see 1:8-16). Micah therefore took an important step toward hope by speaking forthrightly concerning the sins of his people, for their sins were the cause of their hopelessness.

B. *Hope Rests on Belief in Divine Judgment upon the Wicked*

It seems rather strange to assert that hope has, for Micah, its basis on, or begins in, the belief in divine judgment upon the wicked. However, here aspects of attitude and of religious understanding are inherent in his bold denunciations of sin and proclamations concerning the future which are very suggestive in this regard.

A note of certainty characterized Micah's denunciation of the evil of men's lives of his time. What was the basis for this certainty? Its basis was in the strong belief that God, having given His word, would keep His word. Thus the hope of all the prophets, in this instance Micah, was not a matter of wishful thinking. Rather, it was a matter of resting on a belief basic to hope, namely, the belief that God is faithful to His holy character or to himself and that He keeps His word.

Micah no doubt remembered that God had declared many centuries earlier in revelation deliv-

ered to Moses that should they, Israel, forget Him and develop a self-reliant attitude after settling in their land, they could with certainty expect severe judgment to come upon them (see Deut. 8:11-20).

Micah, a spiritually perceptive and sensitive person, recognized to his dismay that the people of his day had either forgotten God or rationalized their ways of living to the point of believing they had God's favor and blessing regardless of how they acted. He refers to their flippant, arrogant attitude that God was not at all serious about sending judgment on those who disregarded His statutes. He recounts how after apparently admitting to abhorring justice, perverting all equity, and building the city with blood, giving judgment for a bribe, prophets divining for money—after all this they could still say they were leaning on the Lord and assert, "Is not the Lord with us? No evil shall come upon us" (3:11).

Micah, like his prophet contemporaries, was convinced God would not ignore the widespread brazenness and apostasy of his people. He was keenly aware that God is indeed Sovereign Lord in the world, that He does indeed reign. This he knew from his knowledge of the history of his people. This he knew also from an unshakeable belief deep within his heart.

He thus recognized readily that judgment to come upon the sinful people of his day was a confirmation of God's faithfulness to His word. Wherein, then, is there a better basis for hope than in God who is Sovereign Lord being faithful to His word? From Micah, we would understand, there is none.

II. *Hope Is the Belief God Is Realizing His Purpose in the World*

While the basis for hope for Micah was the firm conviction that God is faithful to His word, the essence of hope for him was the unshakeable understanding that God is realizing His purpose in the world. This latter belief or understanding is the other side of what may be said about hope in Micah's prophecy. It has to do

with God's previous mighty acts in the history of His people.

Micah apparently knew what these were and their significance, for he referred to the great act of God calling or electing the forefathers Abraham and Jacob (7:20) with the understanding that God would show faithfulness to His promise made to them.

He also knew full well the significance of God's mighty act in bringing his forbears out of Egypt, with the understanding that God still was intent on manifesting himself in a marvelous way in their behalf (7:15). He was fully aware that he and his fellow countrymen were in the "promised land" wherein they had become a great nation.

At the same time he was fully aware that conditions being what they were, there was the prospect of the land spewing out another impure people occupying it, similar to what happened to the Canaanites, his ancestors serving as God's instrument of "purification" (again see 1:8-16; compare Deut. 9:4-5; Lev. 18:24-28). These and other considerations were most forceful reminders that God indeed had acted mightily in the midst of His people up to Micah's time, and that He would act mightily in days ahead.

Micah thus readily understood that God had been realizing and would continue to realize His purpose in the world. It was out of this understanding, as well as being moved by the Spirit of God, that he spoke in specific terms with great hope for the future.

A. *Micah's Expectation Concerning a Ruler out of Bethlehem*

Micah's most startling statement about the future concerns a ruler expected to come from the relatively insignificant town of Bethlehem of Judah. This announcement is part of a predictive unit, 4:1—5:15, characterized by oscillation between the prophet's present and future. This unit or passage begins with generalities applicable to the completion of the realization of God's purpose in the world (see 4:1-5). It includes allusions to times of distress during captivity and exile

(Continued on page 23)

NOTHING LIKE US EVER WAS

by Wesley Tracy

In following the typical steps of homiletic procedure from exegesis to proclamation, these steps will be taken.

- Establishing the text.
- Examining the Literary and Critical Concerns.
- Exploring the Historical and Sociological Setting of the Text.
- Affirming the Theologies of the Text.
- The Semon: "Nothing like Us Ever Was."

1. ESTABLISHING THE TEXT

A. Language Study

The first thing to do in establishing the text is to bring language study to bear on it. Study the key words and, if your Hebrew is up to date, make your own literal translation. Here is a literal translation of the text which I am able to offer only with the "help of my friends."

- 9 *Hear this, O heads of the house of Jacob,
O rulers of the house of Israel,
who regard justice as an abomination,
and make crooked all that is straight,*
- 10 *who build Zion with bloodshed,
and Jerusalem with violent unjust deeds.*
- 11 *Its heads make judgments on the basis of a
bribe,
and its priests teach for the sake of reward,
and its prophets practice divination for
money.
But they lean upon Yahweh, saying,
"Is not the Lord in our midst?
Harm cannot come upon us."*
- 12 *Therefore, on account of you,
Zion will be plowed like a field,
and Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins,
and the mount of the house, thicket-covered
heights.*

B. Compare English Translations

After language study, compare several English translations. A line-by-line comparison of the literal reading with the KJV, NASB, NEB, and RSV reveals little variance. Overall, the NASB seems closest to the Hebrew text. The NEB takes the most liberties. None of the English translations consulted preserves the line "who regard justice as an abomination." All except NEB render the line "abhor justice." This carries the meaning quite well, but may lose some of the force of the original. The NEB changes the meaning by rendering "you who make justice hateful."

Beyond this, variance seems to be largely a matter of selecting English synonyms. Thus, thankfully, there are no major textual problems to untangle.

C. Make the Text Your Own

Next, in order to make the passage your own, make your own interpretive rendering in English vernacular:

*Listen here, you haughty heads of Judah,
You, to whom justice is a vile stench in the nostrils,*

*You who are always twisting righteousness
so that you can legally violate the ethical,
You have built your political and commercial
empires in Jerusalem,
And your great ranches in Judah
On the lifeblood of the poor, by violent injustice.
Your wicked oppression is blatantly obvious:
The judges and politicians sell justice to
the highest bidder, a poor man has no
chance.*

*The priests are priests only because they
hope to fatten their wallets by extorting
graft.*

*The prophets slant "God's" message according
to the whims of their paying customers.
Then you have the audacity to mouth, "In God we
trust,*

*He is blessing us as we butcher the poor."
You think He will be pleased with you because of
your puny sacrifices and because His
Temple is in your city.*

*"Surely no disaster can come to us, God's chosen,"
you bleat.*

*But hear this and get it straight. Your sweet
tradition of the invincibility of Jerusalem and
the Temple is dead wrong.*

*Because of your violent oppression of the poor,
your violation of covenant law, and your
mockery of everything Yahweh stands for,
your precious holy hill will be plowed like
a cornfield, and your blood-built city will
be wrecked.*

*The very mount of the Temple hill in which you
trust will become a deserted hill of scrub
brush, for God will judge you and forsake you.*

2. LITERARY AND CRITICAL CONCERNS

A. What Is the Literary Form?

This is a poetic doom or judgment oracle, and follows the standard form for such writings:

I. REASON

A. *Introduction:* lines 1 and 2 of v. 9.

B. *Accusation:* lines 3 and 4 of v. 9.

C. *Development* of the accusation and the case against rulers, priests, and prophets, vv. 10-11.

II. MESSENGER FORMULA

"Therefore on account of you"—v. 12.

III. ANNOUNCEMENT OF JUDGMENT (v. 12)

A. *Intervention of God* (implied).

B. *Results:* Jerusalem and the temple will be laid waste.¹

This same arrangement of data can be seen in other judgment oracles in Hos. 2:5-7; Amos 4:1-12; Isa. 8:6-8; and Jer. 5:10-14.

B. What About Authorship?

The critical consensus is that the text is the work of Micah himself. Even those who vigorously look for such things find no lurking redactors or hidden editors in this text.

C. What Is the Function of the Text in the Book of Micah?

The passage, 3:9-12, forms an effective climax-summary to most of what precedes it, especially to chapters two and three.

D. What Criticisms Should Be Noted?

First, Micah's reference to the "house of Jacob" and the "house of Israel" could be misleading. They are usually used to designate the Northern Kingdom. But in this case, they refer to Judah as the threatened loss of Zion makes clear.

Second, Micah challenged a sacred tradition which even Isaiah may have held dear. That was the long-standing notion that Zion could never fall because it was, after all, the dwelling place of Yahweh. Micah did not merely edit the old and sweet tradition; he thundered that there was no truth in it. This took pioneer courage.

E. What Is the Canonical Function of the Text?

Is this passage quoted by other canonical writers? If so, what use do they make of it? As far as I can tell, Mic. 3:9-12 is not quoted by any other canonical writer in the New Testament. This text does appear in an Old Testament book—Jeremiah. There Micah's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple is cited by the elders of Jerusalem in order to save Jeremiah from execution for making the same prediction that Micah had. This is found in Jer. 26:16-19. This use of the text signifies three things: (1) the elders believed that the destruction spoken of by Micah was averted by the repentance of Hezekiah; (2) the words of Micah became a tradition of their own, being so remembered some 100 years later; (3) this introduces a theology that frees Yahweh from geographical limitation.

3. EXPLORING THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE TEXT

A. Why Is Micah called the Peasant Prophet?

Micah's name means "Who is like Jehovah?" He was from a small Judean town called Moresheth, which was some 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem and about 6 miles from the Philistine city of Gath. Moresheth was located on the Shephelah between the Philistine plain and the hill country of Judea. His family was probably insignificant, or else the family name would have been used to identify him. Doubtless, Micah was a son of the soil. "Himself a peasant, he becomes the spokesman of peasants" (ICC).² Living between the hill country and the plains, he had a firsthand view of the friction of the two systems of land tenure that operated in Judah. Further, since Rehoboam had fortified Moresheth, he had plenty of opportunity to see how the military and government officials who were there operated. While other prophets designed sermons on idolatry

and immorality, Micah majored on the social injustice which prevailed. Perhaps he himself had been disinherited by those who turned aside the poor in the gate in order to join field unto field. At least he knew people who had been so treated.

B. When Did He Prophesy?

The preface to the book says he preached during the reigns of Jotham (740-736, all dates are B.C.), Ahaz (736-716), and Hezekiah (716-687). It appears, however, that Micah anticipated the Assyrian invasion of Samaria, so he would have been active before 721. We are sure that 3:9-12 was preached during the reign of Hezekiah—Jeremiah so testifies. Micah may have delivered the text near the time of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701.

C. What Was Happening on the International Scene?

During the late eighth century, Assyria was frantically trying to hold her empire together. As long as Judah behaved herself, paid her tribute (she had become a tax-paying member of the empire in 734), and avoided entangling alliances, Assyria was willing to let her alone. A period of prosperity for Judah ensued. Trade was expanded and commercial farming flourished at the expense of the peasants. Uzziah had set the example (742) by developing an expanded system of crown lands. By the time that Micah roared his message on Jerusalem's Wall Street there had been a long period in which the poor got poorer and the rich got richer. The rich were lolling on comfy couches of ivory gulping wine by the bowlful and doping out schemes to grab another 40 acres. Micah's contemporaries who joined him in protest included Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah.

D. Who Were the "Rulers" and "Heads" Challenged by Micah in Verse Nine?

Hezekiah was the current king. For strategic reasons, Micah did not call him by name. But doubtless he was to be included among the "rulers" (*qāsîn*) and "heads" (*rō's*). These terms were used synonymously for Jerusalem officials. In Micah's day, appointed officials administered justice (or an unreasonable facsimile of same). Formerly local elders and tribal chiefs had done this.

The appointed officials were supposed to be the servants of Yahweh with an obligation to preserve His Lordship over the land. But they had come "to think of their authority in terms of the new context of the monarchy and pattern their practices after its use of power."³

A brief description of the simple agrarian society in which Micah lived can shed further light on who and what these rulers were. The upper ruling class comprised some 1 or 2 percent of the population. A second echelon of the upper class was made up of royal retainers and religious leaders. Beneath them a few merchants and artisans operated. At the bottom of the societal ladder sprawled the "expendables and degraded"—beggars, prostitutes, and

outcasts. The largest group was the peasants, making up some 80 or 90 percent of the population. Micah and his aching neighbors were part of this class. They were poor farmers. The upper classes fattened on their surplus which the legitimizing clergy coaxed them to cough up. Against such an abusive power structure, Micah rose angrily to protest.

E. What Was Meant by the Charges Against the Rulers? What Was the Nature of Their Offenses?

The rulers had proven themselves to be greedy land-grabbers who would stop at nothing to get what they wanted. Using deceit, legal convolutions, and bribery, they stole the land and still tried to act as though what they were doing was honorable, noble, and even religious.

To understand their operations better, a brief excursus into the competing land tenure systems is required. In the typical simple agrarian society, the land belonged to the monarch. He could do with it what he pleased. The land and the people on it belonged to him. The land was the economy. Whoever controlled the land controlled the kingdom.

In premonarchial Israel, however, the land belonged to King Yahweh. His land was subdivided by lot to every household in Israel. Lest anyone forget to whom the land really belonged, the farms were redistributed by lot every seven years.⁴ When, however, David united the shattered kingdom of Saul, he did so with the help of Cretan and Philistine mercenaries and Egyptian bureaucrats. To pay off his political debts he made them large land grants in the plains and valleys. The hill country was already taken by Israelites. The grants were not subject to redistribution. Thus a competing system of patrimonial land tenure was introduced. By Micah's time the patrimonial system had proven to be far more attractive to the well-to-do in Israel. The redistributive system of Pentateuchal law was losing the war. Devious entrepreneurs were circumventing covenantal law and "joining field unto field."

Here is how it would happen. If the crops failed, the peasant would be forced to borrow from the loan sharks in Jerusalem. According to Pentateuchal law, interest could not be charged on loans to the poor. But the land-grabbers would make all sorts of contingent deals which resulted in interest rates of up to 200 percent without charging interest *per se*. The farmer had a tough time paying back the loans even if the crops were good. If another crop failure occurred, certain doom loomed before the peasant and his family. The creditor might be satisfied to take a child or two as debt slaves to pay the loan. Or he might foreclose on the farm, take the land, and make slaves or hired hands of the whole family. Such goings-on were punishable by death according to the law (Exodus 20; Deut. 24:7). Yet by legal ruses, the rulers perverted the law until it prosecuted the very ones it purposed to protect.

The arena of the corruption was frequently the "justice of the gate." There the officials gathered at dawn for plea bargaining, backscratching, and bribe-bought justice. Here the poor were turned aside in the gate (Amos 5:12) and no one could

stop these daybreak brokers, for the power to do it was in their hand (Mic. 2:1). Micah further specifies the crimes as coveting and seizing households and fields and taking away the poor man's inheritance (2:2). To take a man's inheritance was to take his livelihood, respect, standing, dignity, and very identity. The real pushovers, whom the land-grabbers scrambled after, were the widows and the fatherless. "The women of my people you drive out . . . their young children you take away" (Mic. 2:9, RSV). No wonder that Micah declared that they shunned justice like the plague and in the gate "made crooked all that was straight" (3:9).⁵

In verse 10, Micah charges the leaders with bloodshed and violence. This refers to their unjust deeds and summarizes a more bloodthirsty metaphor earlier in the chapter where he says that the representatives of Yahweh, the rulers, had skinned the people, boned them, and chopped them into stew meat (3:2-3). Judicial murder à la Naboth may have also become a fashionable mode of expanding the ranch. Also entering the picture we are sketching of the crimes of the rulers is Hezekiah's "urban renewal with a vengeance." He built public buildings, fortifications, and a water system for wartime. Living in a fool's paradise, he was planning to revolt against the Assyrians. The peasants paid the price for his folly, for he made these "improvements" via *corvée*, or forced labor. Many debt-ridden peasants were drafted into the forced-labor army. Leaving their land with no one to work it meant almost sure foreclosure. Thus the poor were devoured and the rich got even more so. Sennacherib's booty list proves that fabulous wealth existed in Jerusalem.

F. Why Did Micah Blast the Priests and the Prophets?

The only thing Micah ever said about the priests (in writing at least) he said in verse 11. There he said they "teach for the sake of reward."⁶ Perhaps when he said this he figured that he had said it all.

One priestly duty was to give instruction about difficult problems which were likely to be brought to the priests so they could render God's will in the matter (Hos. 4:6; Deut. 17:10 ff.; 33:10). It seems that whenever a two-party decision had to be made that "God" always decided in favor of the man with the most money. In order to get their favor, one had to "fee or feed them."⁷ The prophets were no better. Their visions and messages regularly favored the rich and themselves (v. 11).

In doing these things, the priests and prophets were sopping up the gravy from a system which oppressed the poor and broke biblical law. In simple agrarian societies, one of the most important functions of the clergy is to legitimize the rule of the aristocrats. It provided a rationale for the peasants coughing up their surplus to the governing classes by adding divine belief systems which convinced the peasant that it was his duty to bow to the rich. "By legitimizing the actions of the governing class in this way, the clergy reduced the need for costly coercive efforts."⁸ For this service they were richly rewarded.

G. Why Did the Princes, Priests, and Prophets Think They Could Get By with Such Outrages?

Their acts of foreclosure on the poor were clearly against the law of the Pentateuch. Injustice toward the poor is forbidden in Lev. 19:13-15. Leviticus 25:35-37 declares, "if your brother becomes poor . . . you shall maintain him . . . You shall not loan him money at interest, nor give him your food for profit" (RSV). This concept is enlarged in Deut. 15:7-10. Deuteronomy 27:19 pronounces a curse upon anyone who perverts justice due the poor and weak. And in Deut. 24:7 the death penalty is set for any Hebrew who enslaves another. Further, there are warnings that to break this covenant will bring the wrath of God. To these covenantal laws Micah & Co. appealed. Even the eighth and tenth commandments emerge from a nomenclature of land-grabbing and enslavement. Still the abuses persisted.

One of the reasons the "heads" of Judah felt little fear of God's wrath was because of a very old tradition that Zion was invincible. "This was to look upon God's relation to his people as necessary, and not voluntary on his part . . . to perceive it as unconditioned by high demands" (ICC). In addition, the rulers and clerics thought they could get by with anything because their warped view of God included the notion that Yahweh was the sort of deity who could be kept in giggly good humor with elaborate ritual and plentiful sacrifice. So they not only "leaned upon Yahweh," they actually prayed for and expected Him to bless their nefarious dealings. Their success at foreclosure, enslavement, and field-joining was evidence enough to them that they basked in God's smile.

Micah's harsh remonstrance urged upon them the fact that God's "demand for justice was more insistent than his love for Israel" (ICC). The capital city will suffer capital punishment.

H. How Is Our Society Congruent and Incongruent with Micah's?

When we invite Micah to the chancel in a modern middle-class church today and ask him to again proclaim the oracle of Mic. 3:9-12, we must take into account that the experiences and pre-understandings of the hearers are so vastly different that some of them may not even understand the pathos and urgency in the prophet's voice.

The modern hearers will understand a little bit about social oppression, for they have seen a bit of it, maybe even participated in it. Some may identify with the eighth century peasant, for they too have struggled with systemic structures which stricture their lives. They may feel exploited in some ways and know that they cannot do anything to change the situation. The modern cleric will nervously note that the legitimizing function of religion still persists in the civil religion which he may have semi-consciously supported. But beyond this the modern auditor will have to slip into the soul of the eighth century B.C. peasant deliberately and on purpose if he is going to understand. The modern churchman will have economic opportunities and vocational

freedom which the peasant could only dream of when he was drunk. The modern man lives in a semi-democracy rather than a monarchical state. He is likely to live in a city rather than an arid countryside, and be a member of a small but scattered family. Debt slavery has evaporated for the modern hearer and only exists for him in historical novels. Religion today is free to be much more than legitimization of powerful men's notions. Women are more or less treated as equals to men; the public schools have taken over the family's educational task.

The hermeneutical task is to bring these two world views close enough together that the text can deliver its divine message to both. It is not enough to know what it *meant*; we must know what it *means*.

4. AFFIRMING THE THEOLOGIES OF THE TEXT

The next step in building the hermeneutical bridge is to determine what theological affirmations can be made from the text.

Micah 3:9-12 proclaims:

When leaders devise systems which condone and create oppression of the poor and disadvantaged, God will judge them. Even when they hold to a false security of God's presence and favor, He will judge—even taking away their security, rooting out the very symbols of this false faith to which they cling.

This could be restated more simply:

When false optimism about God's blessing and presence corrupts the faith by condoning or creating injustice, God will absent himself from His people.⁹

Or again:

False traditions, no matter how sweet, and wrong concepts of God, no matter how comforting, do not make a people, nation, city, church, or person exempt from God's declared judgment against oppressors.

5. THE SERMON: "NOTHING LIKE US EVER WAS"

Introduction

André Gidé, Frenchman turned prophet, has predicted that the downfall of the American people will be their *optimism*. Do we not exude a naive optimism? No matter what tough problems swamp the world, we need not be nervous for "they" or "technology" or "the American way" or "God" will take care of us. Good, ordinary Christians like us need not worry about world hunger, human rights, social justice, and the like—we know everything will turn out okay in the end. We are what Zechariah called "prisoners of hope." We drift along rendered immobile by a basic optimistic hope that things will turn out alright, thinking that nothing is demanded of us beyond kicking off our Florsheims, grabbing another Dr. Pepper, a bowl of chip and dip, and settling down to watch a suntanned actress take the "Love Boat" to "Fantasy Island."

After all, we are a Zion of sorts, we are God's darling, and while Gidé's wicked France may be overrun by war twice in our generation, nothing like that could happen to God-blessed America. We are so secure because we know we are special—after all, "nothing like us ever was." In this type of fantasy, both Judah and the United States shared. Judah "knew" that Jerusalem was safe—Yahweh would not let anything happen to His own dwelling.

Carl Sandburg's poem "Four Preludes to Playthings of the Wind" belongs to all ages of myth-making men, but it applies uniquely to Judah's yesterday and America's today.

*The doors were cedar
and the panels strips of gold
and the girls were golden girls
and the panels read and the girls chanted:*

*We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.*

*The doors are twisted on broken hinges.
Sheets of rain swish through on the wind
where the golden girls ran and the panels read:
We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation,
nothing like us ever was.*

*It has happened before.
Strong men put up a city and got
a nation together,
And paid singers to sing and women
to warble: We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation,
nothing like us ever was.*

*And while the singers sang
and the strong men listened
and paid the singers well
and felt good about it all,
there were rats and lizards who listened
... and the only listeners left now
... are ... the rats ... and the lizards.*

*And there are black crows
crying, "Caw, caw,"
bringing mud and sticks,
building a nest
over the words carved
on the doors where the panels were cedar
and the strips on the panels were gold
and the golden girls came singing:
We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.*

*The only singers now are the crows crying, "Caw,
caw,"*

*And the sheets of rain whine in the wind and
doorways.*

*And the only listeners now are ... the rats ... and
the lizards*

*The feet of the rats
scribble on the doorsills;
the hieroglyphs of the rat footprints
chatter the pedigrees of the rats*

*and babble of the blood
and gabble of the breed
of the grandfathers and the great-grandfathers
of the rats.*

*And the wind shifts
and the dust on the doorsill shifts
and even the writing of the rat footprints
tell us nothing, nothing at all
about the greatest city, the greatest nation
where the strong men listened
and the women warbled: Nothing like us ever
was.¹⁰*

I. TWO SWEET BUT FALSE TRADITIONS

A. Judah's False, Sweet Tradition (3:11b)

Emphasize and explain Judah's belief that no harm could come to them because God would not let His own dwelling place be destroyed. Even in their wickedness they thought they had God in a box. His relation to them was a "have-to" situation. They never dreamed that God's insistence on justice and righteousness (3:9-11) would outweigh His sentimental love for them because they thought "nothing like us ever was."

B. America's False, Sweet Traditions

Show that Judah's false dream is not so different from ours. Enlarge on this theme, which is suggested in the "Introduction."

II. ABUSES BRED BY FALSE TRADITION

A. Accusations Against Judah's Leaders (3:10)

The privileged class in Judah reasoned: Since God is bound to take care of us, it really doesn't make much difference how we live. We can do whatever we want—and they did. The personal lives of many of the elite were incredibly corrupt. But what bothered Micah most was the unbelievable injustice and oppression of the poor.

B. The Societal Scene

(Insert here your own informal version of the historical-social setting as described in III earlier.) Cite: (1) the makeup of society, (2) rulership, (3) land tenure, (4) land-grabbing, (5) perverted justice of the "gate," (6) Micah's metaphors for the suffering of the poor, (7) the illegality of debt slavery and profiteering on the poor (Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 24:7), (8) stress that while they were making stew meat of the poor and living lives of outrageous immorality they still "leaned upon Yahweh."

C. America's Sins of Oppression

Just as a false idea of God bred false hope in Judah, it has brought Americans to the point of believing that they too can ignore God's standards.

Along with all the good things and the freedoms that are a part of the American way, some things by function, if not by design, oppress the weak and the poor. Interest rates, for example, are higher on the small loans poor men contract than on the large loans which richer persons contract. (Cite other illustrations such as those found in the Ark Rocker column in the Spring, 1980, *Preacher's Magazine*.) Bring in Christ's concern for the poor.

III. JUDGMENT ON FALSE TRADITIONS

A. Judgment Announced

Explain that: Micah told the community of the comfortable and callous that their evil ways would bring the severest of divine judgment in spite of their tradition that God would never let calamity strike His beloved Jerusalem. He said something that no other prophet of his century ever said: "Because of you, Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins" (v. 12).¹¹ It was treason and blasphemy to many ears. He told them that God was going to destroy the city and the very Temple where they thought God lived.

B. The Fulfillment

Explain how: the prophecy eventually came true. The city was destroyed and the Temple torn down. The elite were taken captive. Later they returned and rebuilt the city and the Temple—but they were both leveled again. And today, after 2,000 years, the Temple is still not rebuilt and on the holy hill, Zion, stands something which to some Jews is worse than the scrub brush which Micah predicted would cover the hill. A Moslem mosque glistens in the sun on the holy hill. Yahweh did after all forsake His holy hill because of the wicked oppression of the poor, and the other sins of the people.

Let us learn that when leaders and nations use the shelter of sweet but false traditions of security in God's presence and favor to build systems which condone and create injustice, God will not only forsake them, but will also root out the very symbols of their security.

Conclusion

The Bible tells us that the destruction which Micah predicted was postponed for some time when Hezekiah the king repented (Jer. 26:16-19). And that is the first task for many leaders and perhaps for most of us today—to repent.

The second task is to report, report to God for

duty, the duty of living out the gospel today. It may mean speaking up like Micah. It may mean rising up as a group to challenge unrighteousness.

Gerhard and Jean Lenski close their long book on human societies with a rather dismal note. They say that the future of high-quality human societies is grim—UNLESS societies can:

1. Cooperate better.
2. Replace self-centeredness with altruistic action.
3. Solve inter-societal inequality by sharing.
4. Become willing to deny themselves.
5. Have faith to look beyond technology for a new dominant force which can organize, motivate and inspire.

It seems to me that these social scientists have unwittingly said that the only hope for human society is to live out the heart of the gospel. Isn't cooperation, altruism, self-denial, sharing, and victory over self-centeredness what the gospel is all about? Does not the gospel reach beyond technology to eternal verities? It seems to me that this is the mission of the Church and the hope of the world. If these goals can be won, perhaps someday someone can say, in praise to God and not to man, "Nothing like them ever was."



End Notes

1. Foster R. McCurley, Jr., *Proclaiming the Promise* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 104.
2. *International Critical Commentary*.
3. Mays, *Micah, The Old Testament Library*, p. 88.
4. This view is supported by Marvin Chaney and others. They cite biblical evidence as well as such sources as Herodotus who remarks about the strange rotating land systems of the Hebrews.
5. Literal translation.
6. *Ibid*.
7. Norman Snaith, *Epworth Preacher's Commentary*, G. P. Lewis, ed. (London: Epworth Press, 1956).
8. Gerhard and Jean Lenski, *Human Societies* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), p. 221.
9. McCurley, p. 110.
10. From *The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950). Used by permission.
11. Literal translation.

HOPE ALSO IN OUR TIME

(Continued from page 17)

(4:9-10), as well as return to Jerusalem and to former glory (4:6-7; 5:7-9).

Appropriate to the inner structure of this unit, there is the striking declaration about a Ruler, unique in His person and in His role of leadership, who will contribute most significantly to the realization of God's purpose in the world.

Unique in person, He is described as One whose existence extends far back into antiquity, "Whose origin is from of old, from ancient days" (5:3, RSV); he shall identify as Shepherd-Leader of God's people and shall bear in His person "the majesty of the name of the Lord his God" (5:4

RSV). Micah's pronouncement for the future also stresses that it would be through this unusual, unique Ruler from Bethlehem that general or universal peaceful conditions described earlier (4:1-5) would be realized.

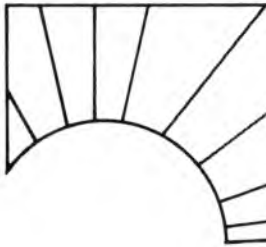
From our vantage point in time and with the understanding provided by New Testament writers, we are able to say that Micah's expected Ruler or King did come from Bethlehem, and that through Him many nations have been attracted to Jerusalem (see Matthew 2:5). Thus Micah's hope as the belief that God is realizing His purpose in the world has been fully confirmed and wholly justified.

B. *Micah's Hope also Is in the Day when Men Meet God's Requirements*

Micah had considerable to say about the lack of justice, about the lack of walking humbly as evidenced in the brazen arrogance of his day, about the lack of showing faithfulness to God and His commandments. He, of course, understood that during the course of the realization of God's purpose in the world all this would be turned around. His hope was in the day all idolatrous worship would be removed from the lives of men and women, in the day when men and women joyously met God's requirements as indicated in 6:8.

Finally, he realized that it would only be through the expected King from Bethlehem that all he predicted on the authority of God would become reality.

Micah's hope is our hope.



MONDAY MORNING

Most ministers need a special lift on Monday mornings. Here are 13 meditations from Micah

The Power in a Divine Call

(Mic. 1:1-7)**

"The word of the LORD given to Micah . . . the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem" (1:1).

Micah, a prophet of the Lord, lived and worked in the eighth century B.C. He prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Jotham and Hezekiah were good kings, but Ahaz was most wicked. Micah saw the apostasy of the nation and the recovery of government during the reigns of these three kings. Since he preached through the days of these rulers, he was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea. His message has elements of the same divinely inspired warning and spiritual guidance as in those other prophets.

Micah's hometown was Moresheth, a village on the Philistine border near Gath, about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem. His message was directed to both Israel and Judah, especially to the capital cities of Samaria and Jerusalem. He lifted up his voice against the sins of his people and warned of the coming destruction of both nations. But he also foretold the eventual restoration of a remnant of believers in accordance with God's covenant promise to Abraham made centuries before.

Micah's authority came from the Lord. In this record of dynamic preaching, the reader discerns a rare and holy boldness. Micah fearlessly called sin what it is, a crime against the Almighty that cannot escape His wrath. He cried out His warnings even in the places of highest authority and condemned evil in whoever the offender.

Micah's courage without doubt sprang from his sense of divine mission. Called of God, he delivered His message no matter what the consequences to the preacher. Throughout his career the prophet was confident in the face of difficulties, fearless before his enemies, and always on course in the stormy sea he knew.

There is nothing so steadying to a preacher as the certainty that he is in the center of God's will, sure that what he is, what he says and does, is what God wants. Like Joshua of old, God's true servant can work with the conviction that "no one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you" (Josh. 1:5).

The Heaps of History

(Mic. 1:6-9)

"Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble" (1:6).

Samaria, the northern nation of Israel, had been

warned about her sins many times by the prophets Elijah, Elisha, and Amos. But she would not listen. She continued in the capital city to propagate and carry out fervently throughout the nation the worship of the golden calf and of Baal, the fertility god. She also practiced the low morals associated with these religions. Jehovah and His way were forgotten.

Israel should have, under Joshua, subdued the whole land of Canaan (see Josh. 1:1-5). But instead, she opted to coexist with nations committed to idolatrous abominations. As a consequence, evil eventually penetrated her culture. Micah, therefore, joined a parade of God's servants who warned Israel that she would be severely chastised by Jehovah. Micah lived to see his prophecy of Israel's exile fulfilled in the year 724 B.C. By 721 B.C., Samaria was a desolation. It is "a heap of rubble" today. West Judah also, Micah's home area, was devastated by the Assyrians along with the destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

When Israel showed her true nature, that she was boldly sinful and would not repent, the prophet cried out, "Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling place" (v. 3). He pictured God descending in anger, melting the mountains under His feet, splitting the valleys, and scattering the waters with his footsteps.

God is merciful toward the sinner. But when sin reaches a certain level of rebellion, when the cup of iniquity becomes full, then God acts to stop it. Thus, in Old Testament days, whole cities and nations, including men, women, cattle, children, and buildings were wiped from the face of the earth. Consider the shame of Sodom and Gomorrah, the extent of wickedness in Noah's day, the profanity of Belshazzar (Daniel 5:22-30), the apostasy of Jerusalem (Luke 13:1-5), and the blasphemy of King Herod (Acts 13:19b-23). Sin has consequences and an end. The outcome is the righteous judgment of God.

The wreckage along the road of history should remind 20th-century preachers of their evangelistic responsibility. We must warn the wicked or become accomplices of evil men. A people that can blatantly flaunt all of the commandments, slaughter her innocent, and live only for the gratification of the flesh are already under the judgment of our righteous God. Like Micah, we must warn by pointing to the "heaps" of history.

The Beginning of Sin

(Mic. 1:8-16)

"You were the beginning of sin to the Daughter of Zion" (1:13).

WITH MICAH

otion for each Monday in March, April, and May.



by John B. Nielson

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This scripture suggests the nature of evil to spread like yeast. Micah charged the Northern Kingdom with prompting Judah to rebel against Jehovah. The sins of Samaria and of the Northern Kingdom reached down into Judah's towns, "even to the gate of Jerusalem" (v. 12). Because of Samaria's example and promptings, the towns of Judah took on the ways of her northern neighbor. They also suffered the fate of Samaria when she was destroyed by Assyria.

The reaction of the man of God to Samaria's debacle was strong opposition and fearless denunciation. Like Isaiah before him, Micah acted out his grave concern with weeping and wailing. He went about barefoot and naked, howling like a jackal, and moaning like an owl, because the sins and corruption in Samaria were "incurable" (v. 9). Micah, in this way, declared his extreme sorrow over the fate of his countrymen who had been so highly favored by God. His sorrow was increased because so many innocent would necessarily be caught up in the general havoc of so merciless an invasion. However, though Micah lifted up his voice like a trumpet, most of his contemporaries did not hear.

The man of God today shares Micah's feelings expressed here. He knows that the consequences of the initiation of evil in others is awful and certain (see Romans 1:32). Micah teaches us that the woes of a righteous God hang heavy over those who sin and teach others to copy them (vv. 12-13). What grave responsibilities have the vested interests of iniquity in our time! Will our generation hear the voice of God? Or will we go on saying, like Israel of old, "Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us" (3:11).

The Violent Rich

(Mic. 2:1-3; 3:1-3; 6:9-16)

"Her rich men are violent" (6:12).

Micah castigates the wicked rich by pronouncing God's woe on those who plot their strategies on their beds at night and carry them out in the morning (2:1). Because many rich have undeserved authority and power, they tend to become merciless toward the poor (v. 2), rob the tourists in the land (v. 8), evict women and children from their homes (vv. 2, 9), and use blood and sex for material gain so that they may establish themselves securely in the city, even the Holy City, Jerusalem (1:7; 3:10). He charges them also with perverting morality, substituting evil for good (3:2). He condemns those who rob the poor by using false measures in the marketplace (6:10-12), who cheat their fellowman with deceit and clever words (6:12).

The tragedy of such a situation in any culture is that there are always false prophets who condone these practices (see 2:6-7). Disgrace will not overtake them, they say. Does the Spirit of the Lord get angry with His chosen people (2:7)? They rationalize for the people—"Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us"—not God's chosen people. Their word is false because it flies in the face of the Torah.

God says, on the contrary, "Am I still to forget, O wicked house, your ill-gotten treasures and the short ephah, which is accursed? Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights?" (6:10-11). The answer is a resounding NO (vv. 13 ff.).

The Ten Commandments are still as valid as ever. Men break these laws to their own undoing. The prophet's word still rings out into the highest councils of church, city, state, and national governments, and into all our economic enterprises. The perversion of morality ends only in brutality and death. When will we learn this truth?

The Breath of the Lord (*Ruach Adonai*)

(Mic. 3:1-8)

"I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD" (3:8).

Ruach Adonai is a common phrase in the Old Testament. It reaches classical expression in the words of Micah, "But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin." This phrase is somewhat equivalent to *Ruach Elohim*, and means, "Spirit [breath] of the Lord."

The varied expression of this concept is found in its use with special Old Testament personalities. For example, when David was chosen to be king, we are told that the Spirit of the Lord leaped upon him in power (1 Sam. 16:13). It is used in the next verse concerning Saul—the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and the *Ruach Adonai* was "injurious" towards him (v. 14, NIV footnote). Saul suffered a terrible reaction of desolation. Likewise, the *Ruach Adonai* gave Samson his sudden bursts of power against the Philistines, skillful war tactics to Gideon, and the power of artistic expression to Bezaleel in the construction of the Tabernacle in the wilderness under Moses. Ezekiel also speaks of the Spirit of the Lord as coming upon him, standing him upon his feet, and giving him his special message to his people (Ezek. 2:2-3, 24). This idea is New Testament thought, as when Paul says that he does not depend upon the arm of flesh, but upon God for his defense (2 Cor. 3:4-6).

False prophets are those who lead God's people astray. They promise fleshly gratification, "plenty of wine and beer" (2:11). They demand that they be paid—if they are fed, they proclaim peace and security; if not, they prepare for conflict (3:5). They love bribes and money (3:11-12).

But the true prophet of the Lord has the Spirit of the Lord in him. He speaks for Jehovah. The Lord's servant always speaks ethically. He calls for righteousness, justice, and truth. He fearlessly exposes men's transgression and moral corruption and points sinners to the Redeemer. The moral aspect of his preaching distinguishes him from the false prophet.

In this thought Micah (as does Joel, 2:28 ff.) anticipates Pentecost and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian believers.

A Warless World

(Mic. 4:1-8)

"Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (v. 3b).

The present prospect for both the Northern and the Southern kingdoms of Israel was anything but desirable (3:12; 4:10). They had nothing to look forward to but captivity and exile. The loss of property and home and children was imminent.

However, in the midst of his dire predictions the prophet could also perceive God as Redeemer and re-Creator of the ideal world (4:10). He believed in the ultimate eventuality of the triumph of the right. This, for the prophet, had to be true or God would not be God. The prophet foresees a warless, happy, prosperous, God-fearing world.

Micah's passage is almost identical to Isaiah's (2:2-4). Did one copy the other, or did each copy a third, or did each receive the same message? Whatever the case, the message is worthy of repetition. The same hope is spoken of in other terms throughout sacred Scriptures. (See Zechariah 8, Revelation 20, Joel 3:10-21, and Ezekiel 37.)

Micah foresees Israel as preeminent among the nations. God's brand of righteousness will flow down from high Jerusalem to bless the world of nations (v. 1). All nations must, therefore, travel upstream (so to speak) to worship God in the Holy City. There they will receive instructions from the Lord, and by that instruction will walk in obedience to God (v. 2). Each person will be constructively employed in working for peace rather than war (v. 3). In that new age, Micah says, the right to private property will prevail (v. 4). God will be Lord over all the earth (v. 5). With man's heart changed and the nations guided by the law of the Lord, the whole world will be secure. The crucial word of the prophet is that such a day and world can be the work only of the Lord. The human family cannot achieve this goal without divine intervention.

This passage is most often applied to the millennial age when Christ shall rule the nations and righteousness shall cover the land as waters cover the sea. To this kind of world, the Christian Church and the Christian minister must be committed. The

ideal will come to reality when the gospel of Christ, emanating from Jerusalem, is preached throughout the world (Matt. 24:14), when the gospel leavens all society in preparation for the Lord's return. Christ alone can establish the kind of world Micah sees. How far we are removed from that day we do not know, but we do know that we must be committed to this goal until He comes.

The Lord Our Redeemer

(Mic. 4:9-13)

"You will go to Babylon" (4:10).

Here is a most remarkable prophecy. Micah made his prediction of Jerusalem's exile during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Thus his evangelistic warnings occurred while the Northern Kingdom was still standing. He watched Assyria rapidly become a world power and lived to see Samaria fall to Assyria.

But the prophet was not alive when the prophetic word of this text was fulfilled—"You [Jerusalem] will go to Babylon." In fact, Babylon was not yet a government to be reckoned with. It would be 100 years or so before Babylon would become a world power. Yet Micah foretold that Jerusalem would be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar and trampled by his grandson Belshazzar. "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

As God revealed to Isaiah that Cyrus (Isa. 44:28—45:1) of the later Medo-Persian empire would authorize the return of the remnant of Jerusalem (under Nehemiah and Ezra), so God revealed to Micah the reality of Judah's exile in Babylon. (See Jer. 3:6-18.) But the dire warning was coupled with the divine promise—"There you will be rescued. There the Lord will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies" (4:10).

God, in this historical event, illustrates His redemptive nature and purpose. In Christ the will of God to redeem and save us comes to its highest expression. Babylon becomes a type of our captivity to sin and the Cross our redemption. We must never lose sight of "the thoughts of the Lord" toward the repentant (4:12).

The Promised Harvest

(Mic. 4:9-13)

"He . . . gathers them like sheaves to the threshing floor" (4:12).

Both Israel and Judah were slaves in a foreign land. They became a prey to other nations because they rebelled against the Lord and His laws for human community. They, therefore, were left without a leader. Judgment and justice were a natural consequence of their decision. Since they rejected God as their king, and since they had no proper leader, they became weak, disunited, vulnerable, and unable to stave off their foe. Then the prophet added that nations weaker than they gloated over their downfall (v. 11).

But the prophet took another look. He discovered that the nations do not perceive God's ultimate

goals for Zion. For the most part, they are blind about Judah. Even to our day, they do not understand that the Jews have been regathered (from every nation under heaven) to prepare for the second coming of the Messiah.

Micah perceived the future plan of God under two figures of speech. The Lord views His chosen people as precious sheaves. The "remnant" is the fruit of His harvest and He gathers them like a farmer brings in his crop at the end of an arduous summer's work. This passage also relates to our time. Not only did God gather Israel from Babylon, but He is reassembling the Jews from around the world. God's people are the harvest of the centuries.

The prophet also understands Israel (the Jews) as the threshing instruments of the world. They will harvest the good grain of the earth among all nations—"Rise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion" (4:13). The remnant are given "horns of iron" to stave off the plunderers and "hoofs of bronze" to trample out the grain.

Hence, out of the world's debased cultures, God will extract the good that remains. This He will add to the wealth of the Lord of all the earth (v. 13; see Rev. 21:26). In the words of the apostle Paul, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him" (Rom. 8:28). God makes the wrath of man to praise Him.

Zion's Coming King

(Mic. 5:1-5a)

"Bethlehem . . . out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel" (5:2).

Micah gives the only prophecy of the birthplace of the Messiah, Bethlehem Ephratah, a little town to the south of Jerusalem. It is not out of the royal palace that Christ shall come, but out of the womb of the common people. Micah's Messiah is the same person spoken of by Isaiah (9:6-7) and referred to in Matt. 2:5-6.

Mic. 4:1-8 describes the glorious future under Messiah's reign. The interest of the nations in Jerusalem is for Micah the setting for the need for a Messiah. He will come to deliver and preserve the city from depredation by her enemies (see 4:9-12).

Messiah comes out of eternity; that is, out of eternity by way of Bethlehem. The words, "[His] origins are from of old" (v. 2), imply the Incarnation, so beautifully described in Matthew, Luke, and other portions of the New Testament. Zion's protection in Micah's time from the Assyrian siege (5:6-15) is a foregleam of the Messiah's role in the last days. Thus Micah's prophecy has both a literal and a spiritual fulfillment; literal in the sense that Jesus did come out of Bethlehem; spiritual, in that God always provides deliverance for those who put their trust in Him.

This prophecy, literally fulfilled, was well known in Herod's day and was quickly on the lips of the religious leaders when the wise men inquired about where Christ should be born.

Messiah provides four main blessings (v. 4): (1) Like a shepherd He will nourish His people. (2)

He will give them security from their enemies. (3) His shepherding will extend over all the earth. And (4) He thereby brings peace to the nations. Hence, Messiah's task is not just local, or confined only to the nation of Israel, but is worldwide in scope.

The modern missionary movement is playing a large role in the extension of the influence of Messiah's message throughout the whole world. Already it is leavening society, producing a hunger for the gospel among the millions of earth's people. Perhaps, better than we can know, the worldwide preaching of the gospel is accomplishing those necessary steps for the return of Christ. Our task, at least, is to keep the message going out by whatever means God makes available to us. The Church is Messiah at work, preparing the world for His literal return and the establishing of His kingdom on earth.

The Remnant

(Mic. 5:6-15)

"The remnant . . . will be . . . like dew from the LORD" (5:7).

The themes of judgment and hope run through Micah's writing like colored threads in a piece of cloth. His message to Israel and Judah is composed of interwoven themes revealed intermittently throughout the prophecy. These threads have a common texture which is called, in the Old Testament, The Remnant.

Micah insists that Israel and Judah, because of their sins, shall be surely scattered (see verse 10-15; also 4:9-11). One reason for the dispersal of these nations is that God might cleanse His chosen of three basic evils: (1) Trust in arms (vv. 10-11); (2) Witchcraft (v. 12); and (3) Idolatry (13-14).

The Exile fulfilled the last two of these goals. Since the restoration under Nehemiah, the Jews have not as a nation fallen again into the trap of idolatry and witchcraft. The penalty God exacted of the nation at that time cured His people of those sins. But trust in arms and human resources is still a weakness of many in Israel. However, Micah looks forward to the day when even this false trust shall be cured in them (4:3).

Again, Israel was scattered so that He might also avenge his righteous anger on the nations that have not obeyed Him (v. 15).

On the other hand, just as Israel was to be surely dispersed, so shall she be surely gathered (5:7-9). The remnant of Jacob that had been exiled among the nations will be reassembled when Messiah comes (see also 4:6-8, and 7:8-10).

The scattering of Israel to Babylon and throughout the world is to bring special blessings to the nations. She is like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass (v. 7). She shall stand secure and strong in the midst of all peoples like the lion of the forest or a young lion among lambs. All her "foes will be destroyed" (v. 9).

The remnant concept, strong in Micah, is also a conspicuous element in the Christian gospel. Within the general worldwide church is the true Church—the Church within the church. Many people tag along with the cause of Christ because it is con-

venient and profitable. But the times that test integrity toward Christ will reveal them that are His.

Lest We Forget

(Mic. 6:1-5)

"The LORD has a case against his people" (6:2).

The judgment of God on Samaria and Jerusalem was severe. But in the passage before us God pleads His own rightness—"the righteous acts of the LORD" (v. 5). If ever a people were ungrateful for all God's blessings, the Lord says that Israel was. He pleads His case before the everlasting hills who witnessed His goodness (vv. 1-2).

He asks with pathetic tones what charges of unfaithfulness Israel could raise against Him. "How have I burdened you?" (v. 3). He therefore recounts His goodness toward them and the miraculous past that brought them to their pleasant land:

1. Deliverance from slavery in Egypt;
2. A national leader;
3. A priesthood that shepherded their souls;
4. Victory over their enemies; and
5. A home in Canaan.

And now the Holy City is like a "high place" in Samaria (1:5). Though Jerusalem contained the Temple, with all the rites and privileges thereof, her religion had degenerated into outward form only and sprang not from the heart. She also completely forgot the goodness of God and presented a sorry picture of degeneracy. The Lord had a right to be sad and to discipline His people.

How easy it is, when we prosper, to forget the springs of our life, to be ungrateful to the God who made us, nourishes us, clothes us, and houses us! Ingratitude was one of Israel's basic sins. Lest we forget the pit from which we were digged, let us carefully recount the goodness of God from the first day He found us unto this present hour.

God's Highest Good

(Mic. 6:6-8)

"What does the LORD require of you?" (6:8).

Most philosophies have at the heart of their argument what is called the "Highest Good." Here Micah gives God's highest ethical good for the human family. Thus another thread is intertwined with judgment and hope—righteousness. The judgment on Israel and Judah is the onslaught of armies of destruction who carry them into exile. The hope is the promise of Messiah who guarantees redemption and salvation. But the Christ demands ethical righteousness in His subjects in order that He may continue to be their Leader. He will not compromise with evil. God forgives the past sins of His chosen in order that He may fulfill the hopes inspired in His people by the Messiah (see 7:16-19). Mercy is the purpose of Messiah's coming.

The passage before us tells us simply that ritualism is insufficient as a substitute for ethical righteousness or to rectify past wrongs. Even a person's ultimate possible payment, like thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil or the sacrifice of one's own offspring, is insufficient atonement for crimes

against the Almighty. These without ethical righteousness are an abomination to God. To the Lord, ritual alone is just empty gesture. God will have none of it. Rites, ceremonies, rituals alone can never be substitutes for holiness of heart and life.

What is God's highest good then? What does God look for in us? First, Micah says the answer is clearly known by all people everywhere (v. 8). All persons know they ought to be good, but everyone knows also his failures. Second, righteousness is commanded. God requires it of us. What God commands He enables. And third, the commandment has three facets: God requires (a) justice—fairness to all men, in all situations. This is the Great Commandment, the Golden rule. All men agree to this principle and expect it for themselves. (b) God requires mercy. Moral kindness is first. Our Lord said that we must forgive if we expect to be forgiven. Furthermore, social kindness to all, especially to the poor and the needy, in whatever form we can give it, is God's will for us. (c) God requires humility. There is only one God—Israel's God, Jehovah. He expects all men to bow to Him only.

Here, then, is God's highest good for us. The prophet does not speak of our natural inability to reach this goal, nor precisely of the way in which our rebellious spirit can be corrected. But the miracle of moral change is shown to be mandatory. We will look to other biblical sources, like Jeremiah, Isaiah, Paul, and Jesus for the dynamic of conversion. Micah is content merely to point out that God is our Redeemer and Savior.

Sweet, Sweet Forgiveness

(Mic. 7:8-20)

"Though I have fallen, I will rise" (7:8).

We come now to the most remarkable work to the morally fallen in all Holy Scripture—the authority and willingness of God to forgive the sinner. This passage (7:8-20) is read by Jews in the afternoon service of the feast of Yom Kippur in observance of the Day of Atonement. It is a reminder to them of God's pledge to Jacob and to Abraham (v. 20).

The sins of Micah's time seem to be four:

1. Ingratitude. They tended to forget all that God had done in their past history to bring them into being, to sustain them, and to bring them to their present position.

2. Pretense. Religion was too often for many a sham. It was perfunctory performance of rituals and ceremonies in the Temple. But everyday life in the marketplace was full of deceit and lies.


3. Idolatry. God's chosen copied the practices and religious rites of the Canaanitish nations around them. Judah even copied the perversions of her neighbor to the north, the Kingdom of Israel. This was especially offensive to Jehovah. Israel had long since opted out of Judah's blessings. Now Judah joined those that played the harlot.

4. Dishonesty. What many in Judah professed on the Sabbath was a far cry from what they practiced the other six days of the week. The rich stripped the skin from the poor, evicted the widow and her children from their homes, demanded and

accepted bribes, and marketed with false weights and balances. Deceit and dishonesty pervaded every thought and act of far too many in Judah.

Because of the extent of this perverseness, God sent Israel into exile. He chose a godless nation to punish His own people. But the Exile was for cure, not for destruction, so that a remnant would be saved (7:8-9). God delights to show mercy, to pardon and restore (v. 18).

The restoration of all who put their trust in God is

an inevitable fact of future history. God's promise to Abraham and to Jacob will be fulfilled (v. 20). Micah sees the day when the Holy God and His people will be united in purpose and work. Or else evil is more powerful than good, a fact that our Judeo-Christian tradition can never accept. The question before us is not whether or not God will triumph, but when? The answer lies in the holy wisdom of God. He "will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham" (v. 20). 

Micah's Doctrine of God

(Continued from page 11)

been the divine standard. Micah is not introducing something new anymore than was Jesus when He proclaimed the greatest commandment and the second greatest commandment.

It is significant to notice the reaction and attitude which greeted Micah's preaching. Because of their misunderstanding of the doctrine of God, the people rejected both Micah and his message of judgment from a holy God. In 2:6 they are quoted as saying, "... one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us." (NIV) Micah retorts in 2:11 that the acceptable preacher would be one who utters wind and lies and preaches of wine and strong drink. Their doctrine of God gave approval to their materialism and greed. They proclaimed their own righteousness and rationalized their behavior, while Micah proclaimed the righteous judgment of a holy God. Thus, in every age, the proper doctrine of God is essential to the correct evaluation of men's lives. This is profusely illustrated in Jesus' confrontations with the legalistic Pharisees of His day.

This lack of understanding the nature of God carried over to the peoples' concept of acceptable worship. Stung by the prophet's indictment, they ask concerning the requirements of approach to God in terms of offerings and sacrifices (6:6-7). The answer shows that their emphasis is totally wrong—**God is not primarily concerned with the ceremonial or more outward expressions of devotion, but with inner heart attitudes and resultant ethical conduct.** Eichrodt says of the matter:

The distinctive meaning of the divine-human relationship was surrender of the whole man. An appeal to the law would have . . . encouraged the heresy that the performance of precisely defined duties would provide a reliable guarantee of God's good pleasure. The God revealed to the prophets was no rigid lawgiver, but a living will, laying hold on life . . .³

Micah's God is holy, righteous, and changeless. He is the Just Justifier, the Lord of History, the Judge of sinful men and nations, and the Designer of Salvation.


In the closing oracle of Micah (7:18-20), **God is also seen as being righteous in His provision of salvation.** God has always found a way to be both just and the Justifier of those who believe (Rom. 3:26). It is significant that this is the final portrayal of God in this book, for it reveals that the purpose of God is to transform judgment to salvation. As James L. Mays says:

Though they are sinners, justly under punishment, God is incomparable as the one whose forgiveness is more powerful than their sins. He delights in mercy and will not persist in anger. Their salvation depends, not on them, but on something in him.⁴

The wording of this oracle is based upon a theological formula expressed numerous times in the Old Testament (Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Jonah 4:2). As such, this theme

represents a theological constant in the Old Testament concerning the nature of God. From various writers and different periods, the truth of God's righteousness in providing salvation is proclaimed, and Micah stands in a long line of such proclaimers.

An integral part of the total redemption of God is reflected in Micah's understanding of God as the Lord of history. Certain significant themes such as the Exile (1:16; 4:10); the remnant (2:12; 4:7; 5:3, 7, 8; 7:18); and the messianic predictions indicate Micah's belief in the universal dominion of God.

The messianic predictions reflect the prophet's grasp of God's final purpose and goal for man. Consistent with other prophets, Micah sees no hope for Israel in the reigning monarchs of his day, but in 5:2-4 predicts the coming of a Davidic Ruler from Bethlehem, the Embodiment of theocratic power and peace, and His coming would spell the creation of a new, united Israel. Gerhard von Rad says that this means that God is once more taking up His messianic work from the beginning—namely in Bethlehem. The beautiful promise of peace in 4:1-4 is also a description of the reign of God, wherein the divine purpose is realized, with the exaltation of the house of God. Throughout the history of biblical revelation the prophets of God have looked for an age of salvation and peace (2 Peter 3:13; Romans 8:22-23) as the climactic expression of redemptive activity of the Creator. 

1. James L. Mays, *Micah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 1

2. Mays, p. 19.

3. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, transl. J. A. Baker, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), vol. 1, p. 364.

4. Mays, p. 11.



THE HERITAGE OF THE MORNING STAR

by Tim White

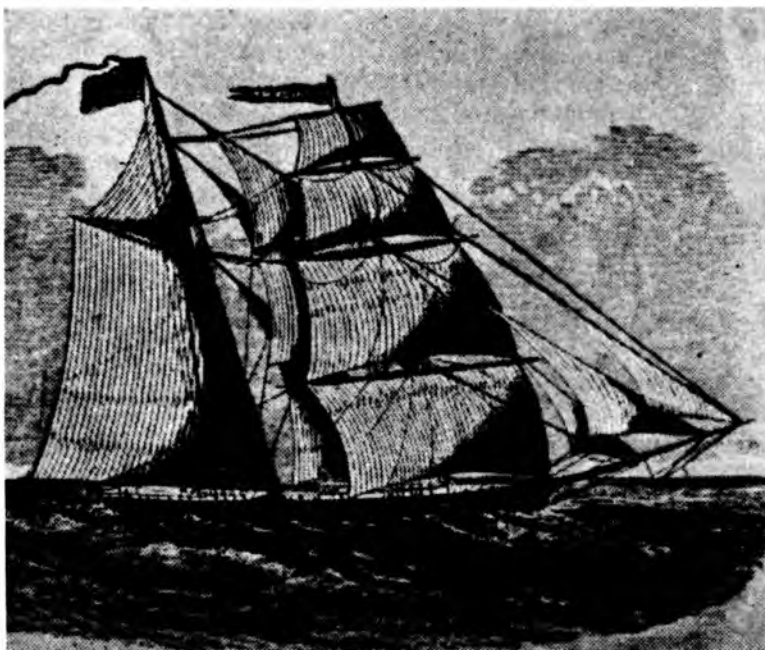
As the Sunday School enters its third century, a glance into history demonstrates its vital link with the missionary outreach of the church. World evangelization and local Christian education are too often separated in our highly compartmentalized church structures. The tradition of the church points to a more interdependent relationship. The story of the missionary ship, *Morning Star*, show a way that the potential energy of the Sunday School can be unleashed through the work of missions, revitalizing both in the process.

This is really the story of five ships, all bearing the name, *Morning Star*. It begins in 1851, when three missionary families left Hawaii to serve the islands of Micronesia, about three thousand miles west of Honolulu. Rev. and Mrs. B. G. Snow, Dr. and Mrs. L. H. Gulick and Rev. and Mrs. Albert Sturges pioneered the work of the American Board of Foreign Mission (ABFM), enduring hardships that were difficult to imagine, even 130 years ago. In many cases, they were the natives' first contact with Western civilization. The difficulty of their work was compounded by disease, ty-

phoons, and tribal warfare. Prior to 1856, travel between islands was dangerous and limited to a small number of charter boats and the irregular schedules of the U.S. Navy schooners that patrolled this remote area.

In 1855 the ABFM proposed the idea of making a "missionary packet (ship)" a project for American Sunday Schools. Throughout 1856, returning missionaries crisscrossed the United States, challenging churches with the need of reliable transportation for the missionaries on the field. All across the country, children gave through their Sunday Schools to make the *Morning Star* a reality. The name came from Revelation 22:16, where Jesus is identified as "the bright and morning star." Ultimately, about \$12,000 was raised through their efforts, more than enough to build and outfit a multi-purpose vessel. Though the *Star* was not a large ship, her wooden hull was big enough to shuttle the missionaries' families and cargo between islands without difficulty.

Back on the island of Kusaie, a rebellion was brewing. Two tribal factions began fighting, and the missionaries, caught in the middle, fled to the hills. The *Morning Star's* first port of call at Kusaie on September 8, 1857 turned into a rescue mission. The *Star* provided the Snow family a means of escape, and a chance to regain flagging strength. Similar conditions were discovered at Ponape, where the Sturges family had been reduced to a starvation diet. In both cases, the *Star* meant survival. Through 10 years of service, the ship was the lifeline to civilization, safety, and supplies for the missionaries.



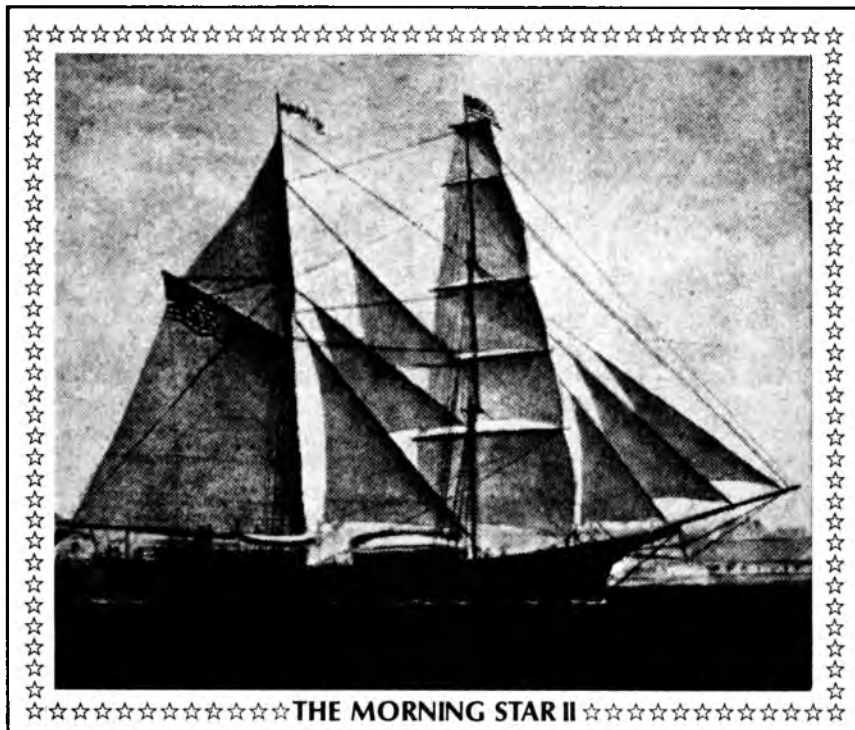
THE MORNING STAR I

A second chapter in this story opened in 1865 when the *Morning Star* began showing inevitable signs of wear from battles with sea, storms, and coral reefs. Some of the missionaries returned to a now-divided homeland to request funds for a new vessel. Since they could speak only to churches in the Northern United States, there was some doubt that they could raise the \$25,000 needed to replace the *Morning Star*. Once more, however, the Sunday Schools of America came through. Two thousand Sunday School groups collected \$28,700 to build a new ship, the *Morning Star II*.

The new ship typified the state of the art in American shipbuilding. In addition to eight broad sails, she was propelled by a medium sized steam engine that was essential when skies were calm. The *Morning Star II* first came to Ponape, Micronesia, in the summer of 1867. She was met by Rev. Albert Sturges, who was now a 16-year veteran of work in the Carolines. This ship, too, served as an instrument of mercy for the missionaries. In 1868, civil war broke out at Apaiang and Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands. Missionary Rev. Hiram Bingham wrote that "during 10 weeks we passed through more trials from Gilbert Islanders than any of us had been called to meet before." Ultimately they were forced to abandon the mission, and it was the *Morning Star II* that safely evacuated the missionary family.

In another critical situation, the *Morning Star II* brought emergency supplies to Ponape following a typhoon that destroyed almost every building on the island. Even in this incident, Rev. Sturges saw God's providence in action. Following the storm, the people of the island rebuilt their fragile church. In his diary, Rev. Sturges observed, "I am glad we came here, and I am glad the wind blew down the church. I shall go away with a stronger feeling that 16 years of very hard labor on a very hard field has not been wholly lost. We will return to dedicate the [new] church."

The *Morning Star II* left Kusaie in the Carolines on her last voyage on October 18, 1869. Although the trip began without difficulty, things were not as placid as they seemed. A strong undercurrent drew the ship back toward land like a magnet. The ship's engine alone was not powerful enough to fight the current. The captain worked out a strategy that he hoped would save the ship. At a depth of twenty fathoms (120 feet), he dropped anchor, hoping to hold the



ship steady until a good breeze could blow them out to sea. The good breeze never came. Instead, the ship was hit by an autumn squall that hammered it into the coral reef around the island. Though the ship's hull was smashed, the crew managed to load everyone safely into the lifeboats.

Even this tragedy did not end the story of the *Morning Star* missionary ships. Three more times in the next 15 years the missionaries were forced to go to American Sunday Schools to request funds for a new ship, and each time the Sunday Schools came through. The three-sailed schooner christened in 1856

was far different in design from the powerful steamship *Morning Star V* which sailed the Pacific waters 30 years later. There remains a symbolic unity between all of the ships, however, for they demonstrate the contribution that the Sunday School can make to other areas of ministry. In addition to serving its educational function, the Sunday School is a valuable resource for both personnel and financial support. Through this ministry the laity have been challenged to reach beyond themselves, to develop their own ministry, and to support the ministry of others. This is the heritage and promise reflected by the *Morning Star*. ★



THE MORNING STAR V

WHERE DOES CONFESSION FIT IN?

by Philip N. Metcalfe, *Pastor, Church of the Nazarene, Royersford, Pennsylvania*

If we were to play a word-association game with "confession," what would come to mind? Superfluous? Passé? Superseded? Roman Catholicism? Does it really belong to a Christian life-style? Do sanctified people have anything to confess? To paraphrase a popular song does love (even "perfect" love) mean "never having to say you're sorry"? Citing confession as a class meeting practice in Wesley's day, Rob Staples contrasts that with "our failure to teach growing Christians and sanctified believers how to confess their spiritual failures."¹ I believe that this omission (or even the insinuation that confession is only something the initially repentant practice) tends toward spiritual plateauing, masking, and parading our strengths while pretending we have no faults to confess.

The purpose of this article is to look at the theological history of confession, to demonstrate the need and show where it fits in a holiness church today.

THE THEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF CONFESSION

To understand the current demise of confession, we must understand the Reformers' protest against the abuses of the Roman Catholic medieval Sacrament of Penance. While the New Testament knows nothing of confession as a formal institution, it became a law of the Catholic church in A.D. 1215. An annual confession to the clergy became compulsory. The "satisfaction" of penance often included an offering, fasting, or prayer. The system came to be closely tied to the practice of indulgences made available through financial contributions to the church.

Luther opposed the abuses of confession, but not confession itself, with his opposition centering on its: financial exploitation, the works-righteousness implications in which forgiveness seemed tied to self-atoning acts, the compulsory aspects, and the unworthy demeanor of medieval friars who controlled the system. Not only did he approve it, but he recognized "no one as a Christian who withdrew from confession, though he sometimes takes it in the wider sense of confession of one's sins to God in prayer for mercy."²

A free form of confession flourished in the class meetings of John Wesley, but he also advocated private confession at times to a trusted spiritual guide:

"And if any of you should at any time fall from what you now are, if you should again feel pride or unbelief, or any temper from which you are now delivered; do not deny, do not hide, do not disguise

it at all, at the peril of your soul. At all events, go to one in whom you can confide, and speak just what you feel. God will enable him to speak a word in season, which shall be health to your soul. And surely He will again lift up your head, and cause the bones that have been broken to rejoice."³

Why has it been so neglected, then? Several likely reasons could be given which include the dawning of the Enlightenment, which took a less serious view of sin, seeing it as merely ignorance and weakness, undercutting the need for confession. Knowledge was deemed more necessary than forgiveness. Then the emphasis on individual freedom made it somehow demeaning to be dependent on the church or anyone else in this way. Much emphasis was made of the fact that the human soul needed no external mediators. The spirit of anti-Romanism in Protestantism cast a shadow over it until anything resembling Catholicism was suspect. However, the principal cause of neglect has been seen by many as the loss of sin-consciousness in the modern age. Main-line Protestant churches have come to view themselves as respectable, law-abiding people. The transgressions of its people came to be downplayed. Spiritual faults and failures came to be concealed; sin-consciousness disappeared.

THE NEED FOR CONFESSION TODAY

Martin Marty believes the great need for Protestantism today is to restore confessional attitudes: "With surprising suddenness we have discovered—almost too late—that the neglect of confession has meant a relapse in the modern world of Christianity into two false ways: legalism and relaxation. Under the quiet roofs . . . live people who use gentility to cover up terror. They use politeness to cover up loneliness; apathy to cover up despair; escape to cover up the vacuum that will not let us be alone with ourselves. In the face of this condition, people of other professions . . . ask evangelical churches why they have given up their greatest disciplinary and therapeutic treasure, confession . . ."⁴

Today we face a rising incidence of "mental illness," an alarming increase in suicide and various forms of addiction. Behind much of the mental and spiritual anguish today is the problem of guilt, an ailment of the conscience. The problem is deeper than a guilt complex; it is guilt. And much therapy today concentrates on bringing an "overdeveloped conscience" down to the level of performance instead of helping people live up to their conscience. The goal is often to enable people to do whatever

(Continued on page 33)

Nazarene

Update

UPDATE EDITOR, SUSAN DOWNS • DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE MINISTRY

CELEBRATION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

In this quinquennium of "Celebrating Christian Holiness," we must give place and emphasis to the blessed Holy Spirit. He must continually be honored, sought after, and given His rightful place in our hearts and lives and in our public services.

Throughout the Scriptures there are several different symbols used to denote either the work or the presence of the Holy Spirit. Among these symbols used are water, fire, wind, oil, and others. One of the chief symbols is that of a dove. When Jesus came to the river Jordan to be baptized by John the Baptist, Luke records, "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (3:22). In describing the people of God, David the Psalmist said, "Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold" (Psalm 68:13).



*By General Superintendent
Orville W. Jenkins*

The dove is clean in nature and as such was allowed to be brought in sacrifice. The Bridegroom in speaking to the Bride calls her, "My dove, my undefiled" (Song of Solomon 6:9). In using this simile the Bridegroom declared the purity of His Bride. To know the Spirit in the holiness of His nature, in the beauty of His character, in the perfection of His grace, is to be in touch with a power which is beyond this world and to fulfill earthly duties in a heavenly manner.

The dove is gentle in nature. One reason given for the gentleness of the dove is that the bird has no gall, the gall being considered by naturalists of old as the source and fountain of contention. There is no bitterness in the Holy Spirit.

The dove is constant in love. One writer says, "Doves by the riverside keep their eyes fixed upon the stream, and in drinking, do not erect their necks and heads, keeping their eyes fixed upon the water, and drink a large draught of it after the manner of beasts." The dove is the emblem of chastity because it lives in the strictest monogamy, never desiring another mate.

The dove is a very sensitive bird—it is so easily grieved or quenched. If human hands so much as touch the nest of the dove or fondle the two pearly white eggs in the nest, the dove will never return and nest there, grieved or quenched beyond any hope of repair.

The blessed Holy Spirit has all these attributes and more. Especially is the Spirit sensitive and so ever gentle. He too can be quenched or grieved by our failure to respond to His guidance or by our carelessness. Paul warns, "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

In this period when we are endeavoring to celebrate the great truth, doctrine, and experience of heart holiness, let us especially seek and honor the Holy Spirit. Allow Him to have control of every service! Let Him have expression in our singing! Have His unction and anointing upon us in our preaching! If we honor the Holy Spirit, He will honor us in our churches and in our ministry.

Celebrating Christian Holiness

One of the most important ingredients of successful ministry is long- and short-range planning. The following general church events, with their dates, are provided by the Department of Education and the Ministry for your convenience in coordinating the local and district church calendar into your total program. The theme, "Celebrating Christian Holiness," is our purpose. The events and programs should support the theme or be useful in attaining the purpose. We want to assist you in your ministry. Call on us.

M. R. M.

1980-81 THE YEAR OF THE MINISTER

October 13-17, 1980	European Military Personnel Retreat
November 9, 1980	Ministers' Day
February 18-20, 1981	Nazarene Leaders' Conference
February 23-27, 1981	NIROGA, Lake Yale, Florida
March 31—April 4, 1981	Prime Time Wesley—England (Retreat and Tour)
May 18-21, 1981	PALCON II, Canadian Nazarene College
May 25-29, 1981	NIROGA, Asilomar, California
June 1-4, 1981	PALCON II, Bethany Nazarene College
June 8-11, 1981	PALCON II, Mount Vernon Nazarene College
June 22-25, 1981	PALCON II, Olivet Nazarene College
June 29—July 2, 1981	PALCON II, Eastern Nazarene College
July 6-9, 1981	PALCON II, Trevecca Nazarene College
July 8-12, 1981 (Tentative)	SOLOCON
July 13-16, 1981	PALCON II, Mid-America Nazarene College
August 3-6, 1981	PALCON II, Northwest Nazarene College
August 10-13, 1981	PALCON II, Point Loma College

1981-82 THE YEAR OF THE LAYMAN

September 14-19, 1981	NIROGA, Glorieta, New Mexico
September 21-25, 1981	NIROGA, Ridgecrest, North Carolina
September 28—October 2, 1981	NIROGA, Schroon Lake, New England
October 12-16, 1981	NIROGA, Banff, Canada
October 26-30, 1981 (Tentative)	Chaplains' Retreat
February 22-26, 1982	NIROGA, Lake Yale, Florida

Spring, 1982	Regional Christian Life Equipping Conferences
May 31—June 4, 1982	NIROGA, Asilomar, California
July 6-11, 1982	International Lay Retreat
August, 1982	Faith and Learning Conference

1982-83 THE YEAR OF THE YOUNG

September 13-18, 1982	NIROGA, Ridgecrest, South Carolina
September 27—October 1, 1982	NIROGA, Schroon Lake, New England
October, 1982	European Military Personnel Retreat
December, 1982 (Tentative)	Theology Conference
June, 1983	World Youth Conference, Oaxtepec, Mexico

1983-84 THE YEAR OF THE DIAMOND JUBILEE

October 5-9, 1983	Simultaneous Revivals
October 9-16, 1983	Diamond Jubilee Week
October, 1983 (Tentative)	Chaplains' Retreat
October, 1983	European Military Personnel Retreat
December, January, February	"How to Live a Holy Life" Enduring Word Series Sunday School Lessons
Summer, 1984	WILCON II

1984-85 THE YEAR OF CHURCH GROWTH

Goal—75,000 New Nazarenes

October 1-3, 1984	Evangelism Conference
October, 1984	European Military Personnel Retreat
June 20-22, 1985	General Conventions, Anaheim
June 23-28, 1985	General Assembly, Anaheim

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2	25-74	6
3	75-124	10
4	125-174	13
5	175-224	16
6	225-299	19
7	300-499	24
8	500 & above	30



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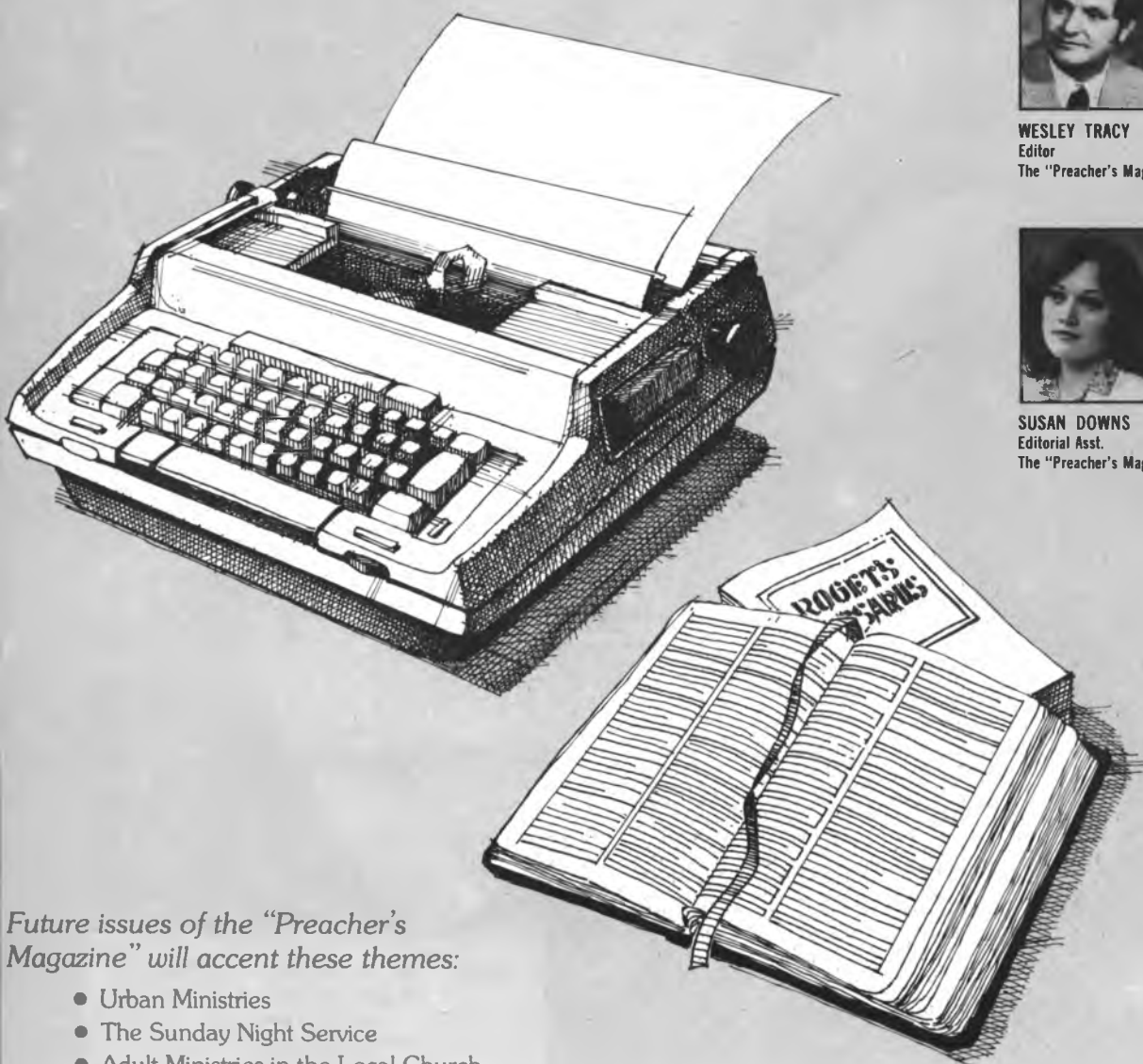
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Serving without pay, the editorial board, pictured here, helped us put together this issue on "Micah."



Future issues of the "Preacher's Magazine" will accent these themes:

- Urban Ministries
- The Sunday Night Service
- Adult Ministries in the Local Church
- Preaching from Matthew



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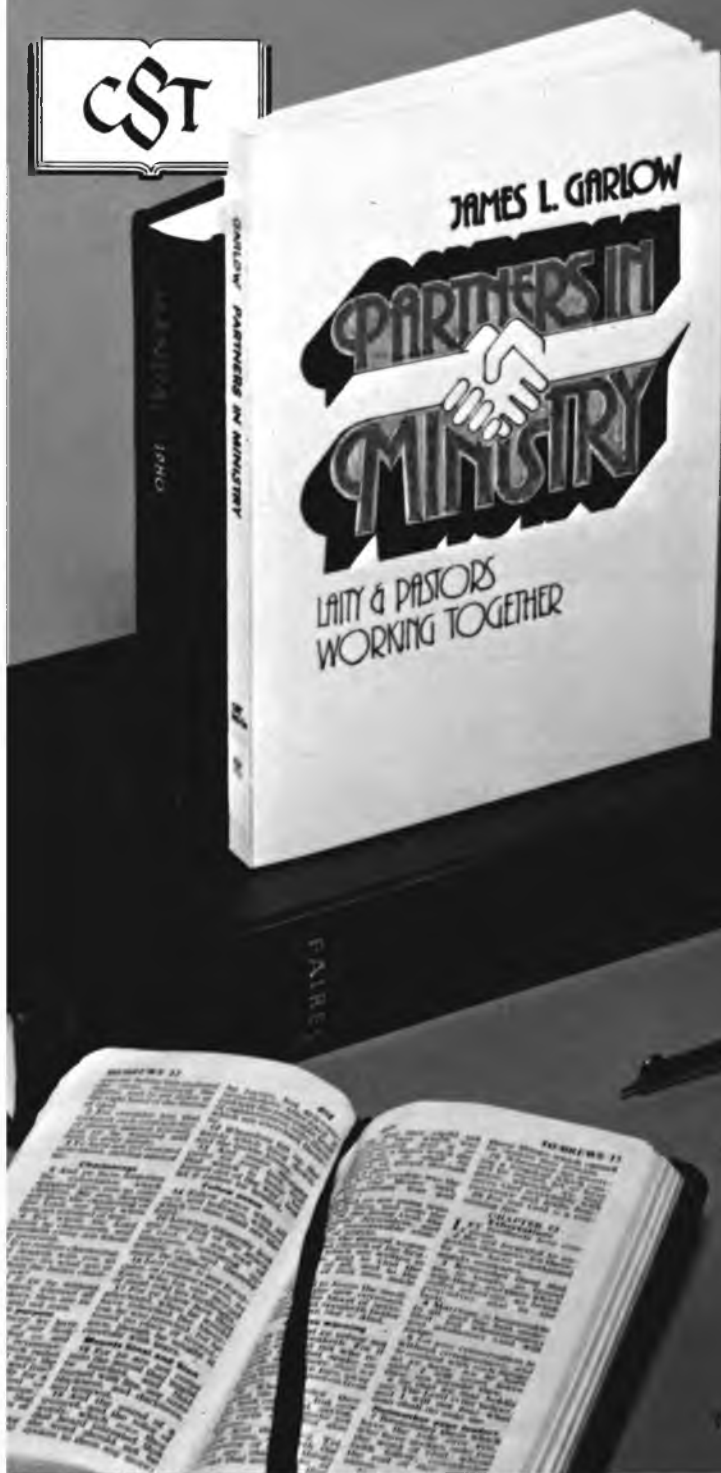
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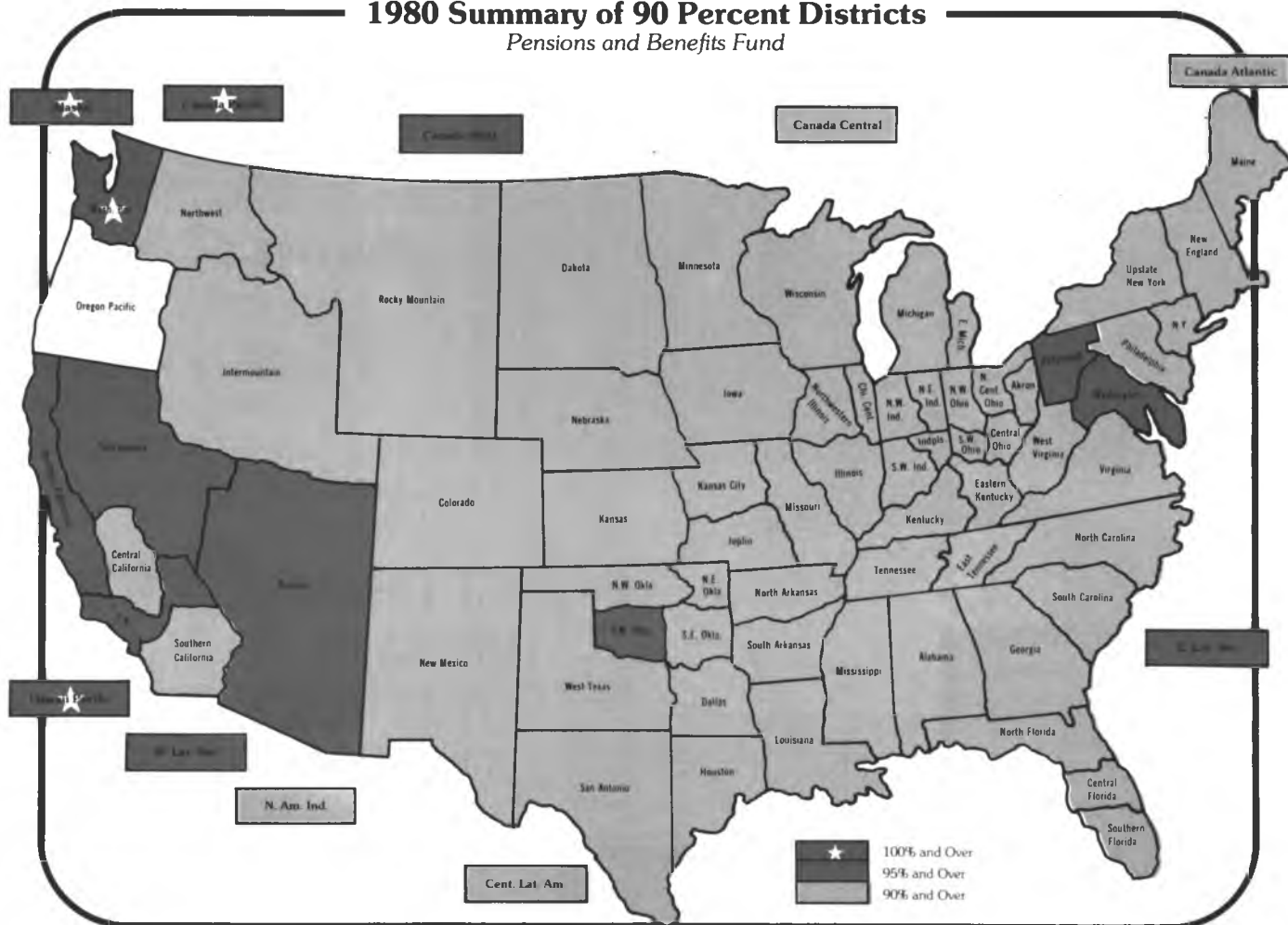
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for payment of the Pensions and Benefits Fund

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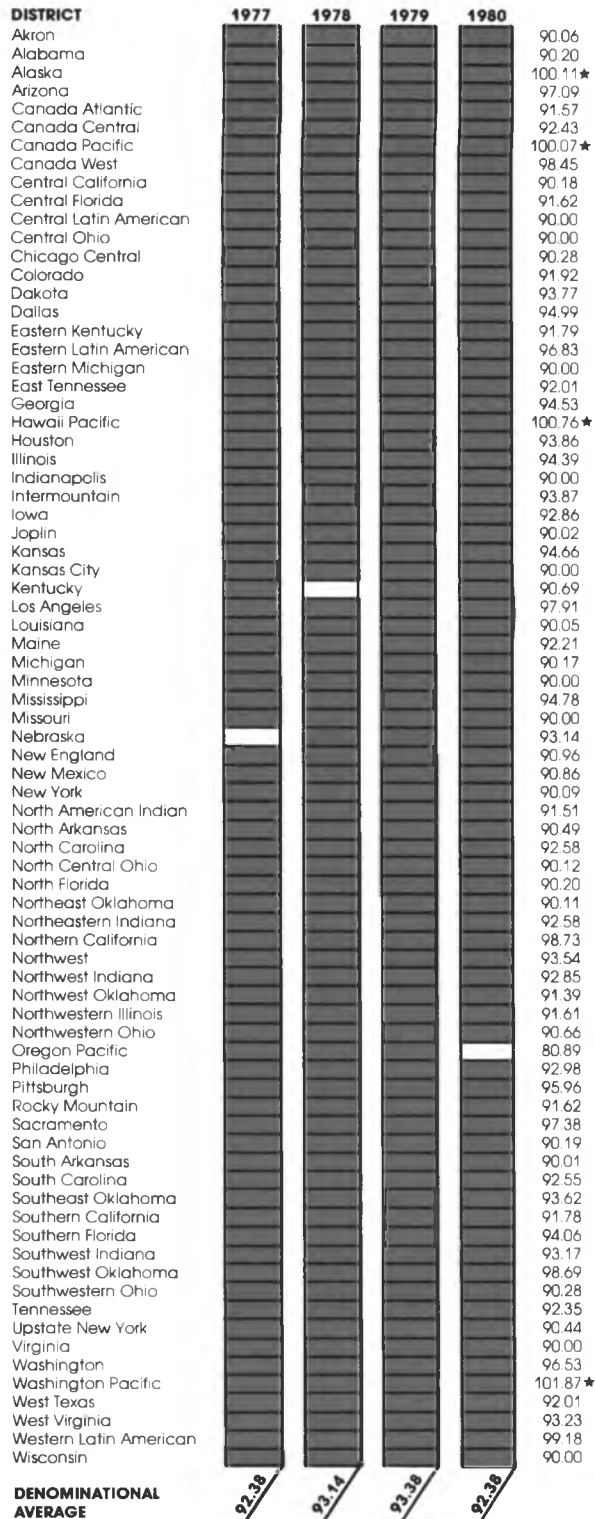
Coverage for ordained ministers is \$1,500 (\$3,000 for double coverage). Coverage for district-licensed ministers is \$1,000 (\$2,000 for double coverage). Your Department of Pensions and Benefits is able to offer this valuable service through the continued faithfulness and cooperation of local congregations, pastors, and districts.

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★Alaska	100.11
★Canada Pacific	100.07
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Southwest Oklahoma	98.69
Canada West	98.45
Los Angeles	97.91
Sacramento	97.38
Arizona	97.09
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Pittsburgh	95.96
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Kansas	94.66
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Illinois	94.39
Southern Florida	94.06
Intermountain	93.87
Houston	93.86
Dakota	93.77
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Northwest	93.54
West Virginia	93.23
Southwest Indiana	93.17
Nebraska	93.14
Philadelphia	92.98
Iowa	92.86
Northwest Indiana	92.85
North Carolina	92.58
Northeastern Indiana	92.58
South Carolina	92.55
Canada Central	92.43
Tennessee	92.35
Maine	92.21
East Tennessee	92.01
West Texas	92.01
Colorado	91.92
Eastern Kentucky	91.79
Southern California	91.78
Central Florida	91.62
Rocky Mountain	91.62
Northwestern Illinois	91.61
Canada Atlantic	91.57
North American Indian	91.51
Northwest Oklahoma	91.39
New England	90.96
New Mexico	90.86
Kentucky	90.69
Northwestern Ohio	90.66
North Arkansas	90.49
Upstate New York	90.44
Chicago Central	90.28
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Alabama	90.20
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Central California	90.18
Michigan	90.17
North Central Ohio	90.12
Northeast Oklahoma	90.11
New York	90.09
Akron	90.06
Louisiana	90.05
Joplin	90.02
South Arkansas	90.01
Central Latin American	90.00
Central Ohio	90.00
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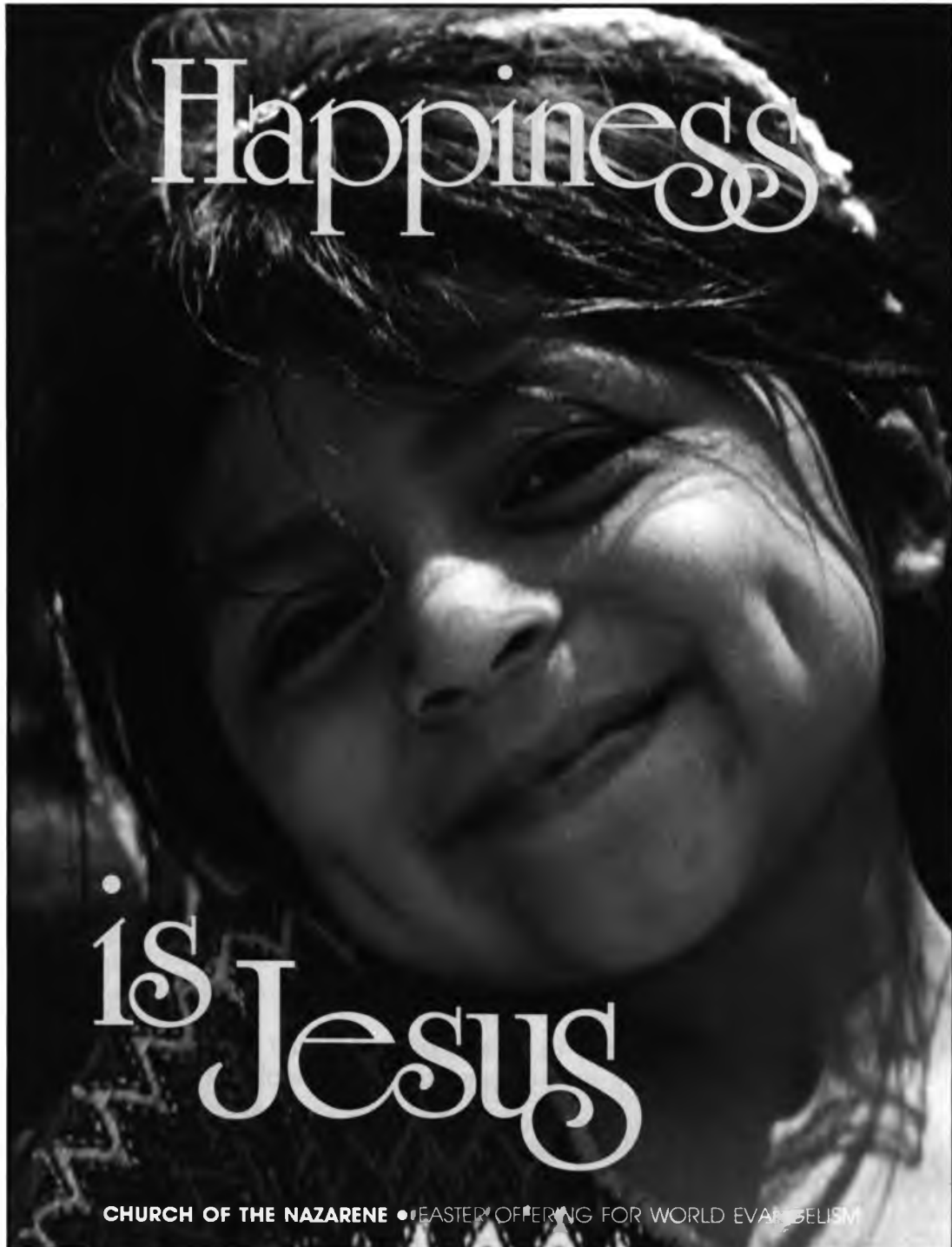
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CONFESSION *(Continued from page 32)*

they want without being bothered by it. Drugs may be routinely used to mask symptoms ("take a pill and keep still"), leaving deep causes untouched. The fact is that much "illness" today stems from the old-fashioned toxins of sin and guilt.

The powerful but simple prescription for many needs is found in our Judeo-Christian faith: a confessional, transparent, self-disclosing attitude that includes letting "significant others" know us as we really are. "Confess your sins to each other" (Jas. 5:16, NIV). "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Prov. 28:13, NIV). Karl Menninger of the U.S. psychiatric establishment asked a pertinent question some years ago: "What ever became of sin?" From the early days of the Christian Church small groups met regularly, often secretly. Their first order of worship was self-disclosure followed by prayers for forgiveness, closed by a period of friendly fellowship (koinonia).

WHERE DOES CONFESSION FIT IN A HOLINESS CHURCH?

Confession Fits in Our Holiness Hymns

A closer look at the old hymns may surprise us with their confessional attitudes: "*Spirit of God, descend upon my heart. Wean it from earth; through all its pulses move. Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art, and make me love Thee as I ought to love.*"⁵ We sang this one again last Sunday: "*Thou, O Christ, art all I want; more than all in Thee I find. Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, heal the sick and lead the blind. Just and holy is Thy name; I am all unrighteousness. False and full of sin I am; Thou art full of grace and truth.*"⁶ Or, "*Thou hast promised to receive us; poor and sinful tho' we be, Thou hast mercy to relieve us, grace to cleanse and pow'r to free.*"⁷ And there are many others. The confessional truth of these great hymns is not derived from comparing ourselves to the gutter, but to the sky! They also demonstrate that confession is not an end in itself but a way to absolution, cleansing, forgiveness!

Confession Fits in the Scriptures

Very early in the Book of Genesis the questions addressed to Adam and Cain were calculated to bring confession. The mission of the prophets was "to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin" (Mic. 3:8) and a reciprocal acknowledgment was expected (Jer. 2:35). The Psalms abound in instances of confession, Psalm 51 standing paramount. In the New Testament model prayer, Jesus taught His disciples how to pray: "Forgive us our debts" (Matt. 6:12) "sins" (Luke 11:4). Luke defines Matthew's "debts"—it isn't financial debts we're to be absolved from, but moral and spiritual indebtedness. One of the highlights of our services has been the periodic congregational participation in the Lord's Prayer following the pastoral prayer. Sometimes we simply pray in unison; sometimes it is sung a cappella.

In Matt. 5:24-34, confession to a justly offended

brother is required. It is even implied that the very offerings laid on the altar are deprived of their value if such confession has not first been made. In Luke 17:4 our own forgiveness of an offender is dependent on his coming and confessing, "I repent." In the Scriptures confession precedes forgiveness: If we *confess*, we are forgiven. Forgiveness is not merely an act of divine leniency.

Such scriptural truths need expression today. I'll never forget a message the late Dr. James McGraw preached in our church in May of 1977 shortly before he died. It was a message from Acts 3, "Times of Repentance, Restitution, and Refreshing." He said, "I guess the tendency for me is to consider myself immune to needing to come before Father God now with any sense of godly sorrow—since I'm saved and sanctified. I never need to acknowledge to the Lord, 'Lord, I've failed You. I'm sorry. I've wronged You.' . . . Sometimes we tend to get a little too much like the Pharisee who prayed in the Temple, 'Thank God, I'm not like other men. I pray every day, I fast, I give, and I especially thank you that I'm not like this poor fellow over here.'" Then he concluded, "We don't want to get that way, do we friends?" The only way to prevent that from happening is to remain confessional and remember, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18, NIV).

Confession Fits Our Wesleyan Theological Heritage

Believers need moment-by-moment cleansing from self-will (those times when we more or less exalt our will above God's); from idolatry (our inclinations to love the creature more than the Creator); from evil tempers, resentments, covetousness, uncharitable and unprofitable conversations as well as sins of omission—all dealt with in John Wesley's standard sermon on "The Repentance of Believers" (one that deserves our renewed consideration). Without ongoing repentance Wesley felt that "we cannot but account the blood of the covenant as a common thing, something of which we have not now any great need, seeing all our past sins blotted out. Yes, but if both our hearts and lives are thus unclean, there is a kind of guilt which we are contracting every moment, and which, of consequence, would every moment expose us to fresh condemnation, but that 'He ever lives above for us to intercede, His all-atoning love, His precious blood to plead.'"⁸

Mildred Bangs Wynkoop cites how that the prayer for cleansing has been practiced from the early days of the Christian Church and particularly indicates how John Wesley, who partook of the Lord's Supper as many as four or five times a week, used the following wording in the *Book of Common Prayer* in those Communion services: "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy Holy name; through Christ, our Lord. Amen."⁹

Wynkoop also notes that "repentance must be a settled life attitude toward sin, not a momentary emotional upheaval . . . No work of grace subsequent in time can have meaning apart from the integrity of a repentant attitude that never ends. This increases moral sensitivity and humility and awareness of one's moment-by-moment reliance on Christ, our Saviour."¹⁰

John Knight has pointed out that "failure needs forgiveness, too,"¹¹ warning of the dangers of covering our failures to the point of virtually living in deceit and hypocrisy. The problem is beyond semantics, beyond ethical versus legal definitions of sin. The point is that confession of either or both is taught in the Scriptures.

It is a recognition that all "perfection" in this life is relative. We carefully enumerate all the things that "perfection" is not: Adamic, angelic, absolute, resurrection, maturity, etc. But too often we have come to act as if human attitudes and actions were "absolute devotion." Our compliance with the conditions of spirituality is often imperfect in the sight of an Infinite God.

Confession Fits Our Pastoral Leadership Style

David L. McKenna, president of Seattle Pacific University, counsels pastors in their leadership style to "follow in your strength, lead in your weakness."¹² Our natural tendency is just the opposite. Since no pastor is perfect we tend to hold our strengths and delegate our weaknesses. But when a pastor leads only and always with his strengths people are going to perceive him as someone high on the pedestal above them, a judge, a moral censor, which tends toward isolation from people. That is why many people with deep hurts and anguish find him unapproachable. He has never shared any of his weakness with them.

Confessional attitudes should be modeled in our lives as the apostle Paul did when he wrote to one church: "I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3, NIV). "If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 11:30; 12:10b, NIV). Generally thinking of Paul as dynamic, strong, forceful, willful, I have only recently come to view him also as being "weak." Using the word often of himself, do you think he was just trying to "sell an image" or "put something over" on us? I believe he meant it; he was weak. But, even more amazing to me was his willingness to disclose it. Because, today, in a world where success stories are spotlighted and failures are shunted into the shadows, even we pastors have learned how to mask our failures and weaknesses. Yet, Paul has taught me that when you're with Jesus it's safe to be weak, even necessary.

I'm not referring to exhibitionism, to pulling skeletons out of the closet, not to airing dirty laundry in public in such an indiscreet way that the confession of embarrassing details becomes worse than the original misdeed. I am speaking of honesty about who we are and where we are. I am speaking of the type of honesty that Reuben Welch frequently

demonstrates when he says in effect, "It doesn't bless me much to say this, but sometimes I disappoint people myself." Or, "What is disturbing to me in my own life is that it is so difficult to let the words of Jesus come down into my daily conversation." Such openness is attractively transparent communication.

On the wall of a tailor shop I recently noticed this sign: "I think people should confess their faults. I'd confess mine—IF I HAD ANY." Why pretend to be anything other than what we are? If we're wrong about an issue that arises, why not admit it? Just a little bit of admission can bring miracles in relationships. Its therapeutic value alone is immense. John Drescher says if he were starting his family again he would be more honest, not pretending to be perfect, but would laugh more at himself, his mistakes and failures. I suspect that many of our tensions are produced because we take ourselves too seriously.

Does love then mean "never having to say you're sorry"? Is confession passé in a holiness church? To the contrary, it's perhaps the one thing on the "endangered species" list we most need to rediscover. Like anything else, it can be abused as history has demonstrated. Confidences can be broken. But its far greater abuse lately is its neglect. Seen positively, confession should be regarded as a privilege, a means of unburdening, a way to maintain right relationships, divine and human. It deserves a higher profile in our use of hymns, pastoral prayers, more frequent use of the Lord's Prayer. It might be used in our Communion services as we "examine ourselves" before receiving the elements; in prayer meetings; in our testimonies; in small-group Bible studies, support groups; in our sermons and around the church altar. Where does confession fit in? I believe it fits in someplace about the heart of our Christian lives! I believe that spiritual renewal is found along its path and that a more considerate effort in this direction will prove the old saying true: "Honest confession is good for the soul."



FOOTNOTES

1. Rob Staples, *The Preacher's Magazine*, December-February, 1979-80, "The Wesleyan Roots of the Midweek Service" (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City), p. 21.
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3. John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (reprinted by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1966), p. 105.
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5. *Worship in Song*, "Spirit of God, Descend," by George Croly (Lillenas Publishing Co., Kansas City), hymn No. 267, first stanza.
6. *Ibid.*, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," by Charles Wesley, hymn No. 37, third stanza.
7. *Ibid.*, "Saviour, like a Shepherd Lead Us," by Dorothy A. Thrupp, hymn No. 489, third stanza.
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9. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love* (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972), p. 249, as cited from the *Book of Common Prayer*, 1695.
10. *Ibid.*, Wynkoop, pp. 344-45.
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An Easter Sermon



THREE WHO BELIEVED

by John M. Gordon

Jesus said to him "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29, RSV).

John's report of what happened the first Easter Day is quite different from what the other Gospel writers tell us. Not contradictory, but different. There is a fundamental agreement in all four accounts of what took place. But there is this notable contrast: that while Matthew, Mark, and Luke deal largely with events, John concentrates on persons.

His 20th chapter, for example, can be seen as dividing into three biographical incidents, each with a particular individual shown arriving at assurance that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. Each of the three may be thought of as representing a different type of person. One of them, perhaps, is "just like you." More likely still, each of them stands for one of the several moods or personality strands in any one of us.

The three who believed include first the apostle John himself, although, as is his practice, he does not mention his own name. The second is Mary Magdalene; and the third, Doubting Thomas. Let us not only identify them but *identify with* them, for it is by putting ourselves imaginatively in the stead of the various Bible characters that we can learn what God has to say to us through each. For example:

1. JOHN Suggests the Approach of the Logical Mind

John seems to have been the philosopher of the disciple company. That he came from a cultured Jewish family is indicated in the New Testament by certain literary clues, and is confirmed by ancient tradition. His partnership with brothers and father in a productive Galilean fishing operation does not need to conflict with such an assumption. In biblical Palestine, as in "The Flowering of New England," men wise in the classics knew how to work with their hands. And if, as there is no convincing reason to doubt, John was the source of the Gospel which bears his name, the style and subject matter of his writing bear out the church's recollection that he was a competent intellectual, quite at home with

the writings of the Greeks as well as with the prophets of Israel. An ancient symbol of this gospel writer was a soaring eagle, suggesting the imagination of a poet and the sharp eye of a scientist.

We are told that John looked at the contents of the deserted tomb, "and believed." What he saw, as his eyes became accustomed to the semidarkness, was the strange basis, apparently, for his belief in the resurrection of his Lord. He saw, and Peter confirmed it, "The linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself" (John 20:6-7, RSV).

Such detail may sound quite irrelevant unless we can visualize the mode in which respected people of the time were buried. They were bound around and around with bandages until encased in a linen cocoon. Then the head was wrapped separately in a linen napkin, and the corpse so swaddled was laid out on the slab prepared for it. Are you able to picture the body of Jesus thus treated? And can you now look with John's eyes at the place where Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had reverently laid him? There are the linen cloths, still wrapped in loops. There is the napkin, neatly folded where Jesus' head had been. *But the body is gone!* The grave clothes undisturbed meant only one thing to John's probing mind. Jesus had moved out of his linen strait-jacket without any unwinding or breaking of the fabric. This was not, as had been the case with Lazarus, earlier, a miraculous resuscitation—wonderful as that would have been. It was not a reanimation, that is, of a body that had ceased to breathe and begun to deteriorate. Rather, here was evidence of *transmutation*: a change of material as distinct as the turning of water into vapor or of matter into energy!

I cannot help connecting this glimpse of John, staring at the gravecloths, with another scene I can recall reading about some years ago. Albert Einstein is lying on his back on the deck of a vessel steaming through the Mediterranean Sea, looking up into the blue depth above, when suddenly he "sees" his concept of matter which is to revolutionize science and let into human life the practical utilization of atomic energy with all its potency for good

or ill. Or one thinks of Madame Curie's wide-eyed recognition that the chunk of coarse pitchblende in her hand holds the secret of available radium. Three Greek words for "seeing" follow one another in quick succession in the Bible passage now before us: John *blepei* (glanced); Peter *theorei* (stared); then John went in and *eide* (perceived or "saw into").

John doubtless knew the philosophical Greek theory of immortality—that the soul of man departed from the body at death, leaving the corpse to rot and return to dust. But here was evidence of something more than the soul's capacity to escape and live on. Here was *resurrection*—new body for old. Here were strange new powers for defying ordinary limitations of time and space and for transcending material barriers. Here was initial corroboration for John that when Jesus would that same evening come into the room where the disciples were to be gathered, He would enter in spite of locked doors, but He would be no ghost. Each encounter with the risen Christ would be reminding them of what John here realized. Jesus was physically alive in a new dimension. His body now was the perfect servant of His spirit, as indeed ours too shall be someday for His sake and at His command.

Men had no adequate scientific vocabulary in Jesus' time to describe the relationship between matter and energy. Witnesses like Paul and John who voiced their Resurrection faith in preaching and writing were forced to resort to much simpler analogies—the seed is only fulfilled in the plant; flesh of fish differs from that of animals; stars vary in their "glory" (a most expressive ancient word to describe radiant energy). Jesus had to hint at the breathtaking meaning of what had happened, not alone by coming through barred doors, but also by eating broiled fish in their presence. This body was different, but it was definite too. "I am no ghost; it is I myself!"

How Paul would have reveled in the analogies to be drawn from today's physics. We yawn at marvels which make the romancing of Jules Verne or of the unknown author of Arabian Nights seem tame indeed. How delighted John would have been could he have drawn on 20th-century terminology to illustrate what the empty gravecloths meant. But he grasped enough of their import to be himself an example of the great truth that the more a person alerts his intellect, the more sound sense the Resurrection gospel makes. The more we learn about the universe, our physical home, the more we may expect to feel at home intellectually and spiritually in the New Testament.

John, looking into the empty sepulchre and perceiving what had occurred, represents man's inquiring mind as it suddenly comes to see that the answer to its deepest questions is in Christ, crucified and risen. The Word made flesh to dwell among us is also the latest, surest word concerning the nature of the body that shall be. This is the legitimate inference of the logical mind as it looks into the evacuated tomb.

2. MARY MAGDALENE Represents the Insight of the Hungry Heart

She was a woman, and a very feminine one at that. She had been too much the female in the past, for she had had a "past" during which her sex had been the most noticeable thing about her. A new creature now, but still a woman, here she is weeping as women will when their emotions are stirred. She is turning from the tomb, not having noticed the graveclothes. They would only have baffled her if she had. Her snap judgment was that someone had stolen the body of her Lord. Others, more calculating, would propose the same theory in time to

come as a way of explaining away Christ's triumph. As a theory it will not stand the test of logic, but for Mary it was no theory—only a guess. And women do not need to be long on logic. They have intuition! Sometimes it works well, and again not. Blinded by her tears, and perhaps also by His deliberate disguise, she supposed that He was the gardener. Her intuition was a bit off beam.

No, this is not trying to be facetious. I am just trying to echo the sort of thing the more level-headed male disciples would be saying a little later when some of the women would be returning from the sepulchre to report a vision of angels who announced that Jesus was alive. You can almost hear the men scoff. "You girls are always seeing and hearing what you want to see and hear. 'Angels?' More likely the brush of bats' wings, or owls heading home to roost. 'Men in white?' Wisps of early morning fog, perhaps!"

But the women are not to be so lightly dismissed. We men do well not to forget that they were last at the Cross and the first at the tomb. And more than once in Christian history since, it has been a woman who has kept the flame of the faith burning. God surely knew what he was doing when he made us male and female. If woman's intuition has its limitations, so, too, does man's intellect. Mary did at first mistake Jesus for the gardener, but when He spoke her name—"Mary!"—she knew without looking who it was. "Rabboni!" she replied, "Dear, dear Master!"

Thank God for Mary, and for her intuitions. Thank God for the reasons of the heart, as well as of the head. Logic has its limits. And while selfish love can be blind, true love is deeply discerning. Besides, let us not exaggerate the difference, or settle it on separate sexes. Every normal human is both head and heart, intellect and instinct. The gospel places these case histories in their proper order. John was a "brain" who saw that there are tremendous theological implications in the Resurrection. But to see God, Jesus clearly told us, a man (as well as a woman) must have a heart in good working order. A healthy heart is a hungry heart. People with hungry hearts soon recognize Jesus as the sought-for Savior, the living, loving Lord who speaks our name and lets us know that it is He.

Before His crucifixion, Jesus was talking to His disciples about His impending death. He was telling them that He must leave them, but that He would return in a new role to be with them always. The world would not recognize His nearness, but they would. "'How is it,' [they inquired,] 'that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?'" (John 14:22, RSV).

"If a man loves me," [He answered,] "he will keep my word (John 14:23, RSV)," and He went on to show that such loving obedience would be the secret of their sensitiveness to His presence.

In weighing the evidence for the proposition that Jesus is alive and in the place of power at God's right hand, do not overlook the testimony of many lovers of Jesus who can tell you that their elemental heart hunger has been and continues to be satisfied perfectly by Him. There is, in other words, such a thing as a personal experience; yes, let us dare call it an *emotional* experience of Christ. Standing as it does between John's inquiring intellect and Thomas's stubborn will, Mary's emotion is guarded from becoming mere bathos. So may ours be. Purists in worship may turn up their noses at a song like "In the Garden." The verse is no great shakes, and the music is not Bach by any means, but it utters something which is important and legitimately Christian.

*I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses;*

*And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.**

He manifests His presence by the solid comfort He brings to the hungry heart.

3. THOMAS in Turn Reminds Us of the Necessity of the Conquered Will

"The Twin" was his original nickname, but "The Doubter" is the label which superseded it. Ordinarily when we speak of doubt, we have in mind intellectual difficulties posed by the vastness of our universe, or by the rampant evil which belies God's just government, or by the latest psychological explanation of the soul's "nonexistence," or by modern man's bafflement with the language of the Bible. Thomas's doubts, however, would seem to have been much deeper than mere intellectual uneasiness. If you will check the several passages in which he appears on the Bible page, I think you will sense that his deepest discomfort is rooted in his disposition, rather than in his mind. They showed themselves in a certain stubborn pessimism which was his defense mechanism against what he had decided was a grim kind of world and a harsh sort of Heavenly Father.

There was in Thomas something of the spirit of the man in Jesus' parable who had organized his affairs on the assumption that his master was a hard man, demanding more than his due.

John's order in listing these three Resurrection Day encounters with Christ is climactic. Before man listens to his heart, he should be sure that his head is functioning—whether the subject is religion or romance! But it is true besides, that neither head nor heart can fully speak for us or finally convince us.

It is a strange and awe-full fact that one may be convinced intellectually that the Bible tells truth, and stirred emotionally to the point of hunger for God's peace, and yet that one may still be holding out against the claims of Jesus to be his Lord and God. The reason for his reservation may be mainly moral. Flaws in his character may call for critical attention which he is unwilling to risk. I know emotionally ill persons who want to be well but who fear the painful prospect of having to be utterly honest about themselves. Thomas may have cherished a particular vice. More likely he was an upright man, the defect of whose rectitude was the rigidity which accompanies virtue now and then. He may have been so constructed that decisions must always go his way "or else." In myself I think of it as the "Atlas Complex": a compulsive carrying of the weight of the whole world on one's shoulders, and a consequent despair of ever really succeeding at anything.

One thing is clear, however, about Thomas. Whatever the cause of his doubting, the cure lay in the surrender of his will to the One who had come to conquer it.

At times I have been troubled a little by the fact that after His resurrection, Jesus revealed himself alive only to *disciples*. This could make the whole matter smell slightly fishy, don't you think? And inevitably the theory has been put forth that the disciples "saw" their friend Jesus in much the same manner that thirsty travelers see mirages in Sahara or nonexistent oases. Longing mixed with hope can produce illusion. "The disciples saw what they wanted and half-expected to see." So runs the cynical verdict.

Like every other stock objection to the resurrection of Jesus, this one falls apart by its own structural weakness. The disciples ruefully remind us that they did *not* half-hope it would happen. They were frightened and disil-

lusioned and hopeless and hard to convince. All of them shared something of Thomas's stubborn refusal to credit the reports until Jesus himself, patiently and personally, reinforced what had been told them.

What the limited scope of His resurrection appearances does illustrate is not the gullibility of believers but rather the moral quality of belief. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus, like belief in the existence of God himself, is practically impossible and essentially unstable unless at the decision-point of his inner existence a man is prepared to say Yes! to the Lord when He makes himself known. This is not circular argument. It is the way persons discover other persons, and it is the way a man can find God.

Thomas's earlier absence when Jesus met with the rest may well have been a case of moral struggle and final moral decision. Was it his willfulness which had kept him away the first time Jesus found them behind barred doors? And was it his sense of duty which drew him to the same place for the second, conclusive appointment? We may guess so. But there is no question whatever, as there was not in Thomas's mind by that time, what was expected of him before he could be fully reinstated.

The poet has phrased it well:

*"Our wills are ours, we know not how
Our wills are ours to make them Thine!"*

And was not Jesus enforcing much the same lesson for Thomas? He is to stop wanting things his way and to start willing everything Christ's way. Else he will continue to be a divided, defeated, doubtful person. So with his stubbornness shattered, down he goes at Jesus' feet to confess his willingness.

The pure in heart are the ones who see God. And purity of heart, as a seer has said, is to will one thing, namely, the will of God.

If God is unreal to you, the resurrection hope will be unreal too, and for the same reason. The Bible in that case will be a closed book, and prayer a matter of bouncing your faint hopes off the ceiling. The church will be irrelevant, and religious exercise a waste of time.

God cannot, or will not, be real to you until you are ready. Perhaps in desperation you will cry out to a still nameless Deity. Perhaps in sheer boredom and disgust with life you will attempt a prayer. "What is Your name?" "What is Your game?" "What is this life all about?" "Who am I?" "What do You want me to do?" Ah, that last cry, if you mean it, is enough. If it is an honest inquiry, it will get an answer. And if you are within earshot of the Christian gospel, that answer will be in terms of Jesus Christ.

It may not at first be a Risen Christ whom you will meet and recognize as your Answer. It may well be the Man on the New Testament pages whose words ring true and whose deeds give you new hope. Sooner or later He will seem to be talking about you and to you and saying, "Well, how about it; what will you do with Me?"

Then if you decide to give Him a try, using whatever logic your mind can command, and with the hungry longing of your heart whispering, "Yes! Yes! He is the One we need!" you are on your way to knowing the full story. You will begin to know Him as the Son of God and Savior, the Victor over death, and Coming King.

You and I live at the wrong time to make the journey with Peter and John to the sepulchre, or to greet Jesus in Joseph's garden with Mary Magdalene, or to be congregated with the Eleven and confronted by His Majesty in their secret hiding place.

(Continued on page 61)

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EVANGELISM—THE RIGHT MIX

by Charles Shaver*

*A Condensation of an Address Presented to the Billy Graham School
of Evangelism, Kansas City, Missouri.*

Evangelism has had its unpopular days. Both the practice of evangelism by a Christian layman in the most natural way and the person of the full-time evangelist have been attacked. Perhaps this criticism reached its heights of injustice in 1960, during Billy Graham's Berlin crusade. The Communist newspaper repeated the charge that Billy frequented night clubs and, worse yet, was accompanied by a "blond called Beverly Shea."¹

Now evangelism is experiencing more favorable days. As a result, many conferences have been held telling us how to get the job done. Often one leaves a particular conference emphasizing a particular type of evangelistic ministry saying, "If only I would do *this one thing*, our church would really begin to move."

But rarely will the addition of just *one* thing do the job. It is the balanced combination of many things that produce an evangelistic church. It's what McGavran and Arn call "the right mix."² It's Men in Action's "Building Blocks for Church Growth" (prayer, fellowship, personal evangelism, public evangelism, follow-up) in right relation to each other. Engel and Norton say the church needs "a research-based, Spirit-led strategy to reach people with the Good News and to build them in the faith."³ It is not adding one thing, but developing a research-based, Spirit-led *strategy*.

THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT— THE RIGHT MIX

I think I first became aware of the "right mix" of elements as I studied the account of the 3,000 converted after Peter's Pentecost sermon. I noted that Peter's great power was because he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:4). Then I was plagued with the question, "If I'm a Spirit-filled Christian minister, how come 3,000 have never been converted through one of my sermons?" Then I discovered the other elements in the mix.

First, though it is true Peter was filled with the Spirit, he was one of 120 filled with the Spirit.

Secondly, among these Spirit-filled disciples, there were 11 who had been intensively discipled by Jesus for three years. Today we may have Christian workers filled but not trained or trained but not filled—but in Peter's day there was the right combination.

A third condition has to do with the 3,000 Jews who were converted in Acts 2:41. I used to think they were converted out of the "raw" when they heard the Christian message for the very first time. Now I realize they were a cultivated people. A unique combination of events and God's prevenient grace had prepared them to receive the gospel.

Consider some of several possible factors:

1. They were not the ordinary "run of the mill" Jews but the most devout. Acts 2:5 describes them as "Jews, devout men, out of every nation."
2. They had come to the Feast of Pentecost and thus were in Jerusalem for religious reasons (Acts 2:1), already thinking in a religious direction. These were Jews who looked for the Messiah most expectantly.
3. The news of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ was being discussed everywhere.
4. Peter's strong sermon drew heavily on Old Testament Scripture with which they were well acquainted.

Thus, the great ingathering of souls at that time was *not just because Peter* had become filled with the Spirit. It was the right mix of a Spirit-filled preacher, 120 disciples filled with the Spirit, Christian workers previously trained, and a cultivated group of prospects.



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THE CHURCH—THE RIGHT MIX

Leighton Ford has said, "The strategy to which we are called today is one of total evangelism . . . Our goal is nothing less than *the penetration of the whole world*. . . . If our goal is the penetration of the whole world; then for the *agents* to carry out this task we must aim at nothing less than *the mobilization of the whole church*."⁴ This mobilization of the whole church will mean developing a church that is the right mix of *delivery room—nursery—school—workshop*. It will be the delivery room where new souls are born into the Kingdom. It will be a nursery where the newly born are cared for. It will be a school where the growing Christian is trained. It will be a workshop where the mature Christian will serve and produce for the Kingdom.

Imagine a church that is all delivery room and no nursery. It is highly evangelistic and new people are won to Christ, but there is little post-conversion care. To counter this, I train follow-up workers to lead new Christians through *Basic Bible Studies*⁵ by regularly meeting in the convert's home. We must prepare for birth before it happens by developing what Modie Schoonover called "a church with enough love to keep them warm":

"It's like the hospital nursery. The newborn babies are not sent home three minutes after their birth to fend for themselves. Because of their fragile condition, they receive warmth, love, a special diet, a germ-free atmosphere, specially trained nurses who are on duty around the clock. So in the spiritual realm, it is not enough for people to be 'born again,' to be born spiritually, there must be a warm and loving spiritual atmosphere with people who will care for, feed, protect and guide their newborn spiritual children during their first crucial days."⁶

But a church cannot be content to simply win new people and begin establishing them; there must be ministry to long-term Christians. If all the public preaching deals only with saving faith, a sad condition afflicts the believer. Engel and Norton state, "Spiritual reproduction is impossible if the believer's spiritual growth is arrested either because of disobedience or because of inability to find satisfying answers to personal problems in his spiritual pilgrimage."⁷ The church in its role of school ought to be supplying those satisfying answers.

The saint will find fulfillment, and the church will grow when the saint serves—so the church must be a workshop. It should train its Christians, recognize their God-given gifts, and provide opportunities to serve. So for the church, it is not just one thing. It is the right mix. It is church as delivery room—nursery—school—workshop.

THE WORKERS—THE RIGHT MIX

Ephesians 4:11-12 teaches that God has given evangelists, pastors, and teachers to the Church for the equipping of the saints for the work of service. Today the pastor is valuable because he has a God-given ability to communicate the practice of ministry to laymen—and they all serve. The right mix means both pastor and layperson serve and minister.

But there is a right mix in another sense. When I first began training laypersons in personal evangelism, I noted that when people began to emerge as people with the gift of evangelism, some negative things could happen too. Those with the evangelistic gift might feel that other Christians not winning as many souls were spiritually defective. Or the less capable soul winner felt inferior.

Yet God has not gifted everyone with the same evangelistic skills. According to Peter Wagner, perhaps 10 percent of a local congregation has the gift of evangelist,⁸ though all have the role and responsibility of witness. Now I see, that in regard to the evangelistic task of the church, the gifts of the members of our congregation will cause the emergence of a mix in which some will be *cultivators*; some, *converters*; and some, *conservers*.

The cultivator prepares people to receive the gospel. He probably has the gift of hospitality and knows how to build bridges of friendship to the unsaved. The converter has the gift of evangelism and deals with people in intensive, face-to-face encounter and leads them to Christ. The conserver has the gift of exhortation, encouragement, or teacher. His special concern for people equips him to follow up and establish new Christians in their faith.

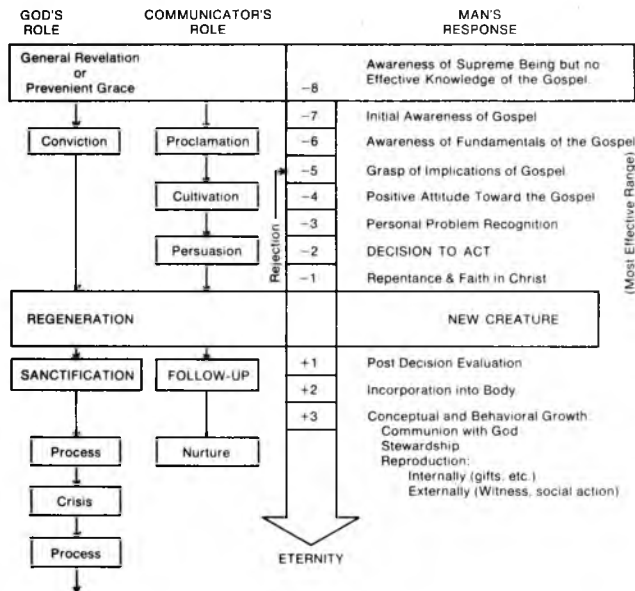
I asked Don⁹ to accompany me on a call to see Dick who had recently visited our church. Don was a sincere Christian, somewhat quiet, a loving person, but I wasn't sure he had the evangelistic gift. Dick had recently moved to Kansas City, was a university graduate, and was starting a job as an engineer. As we talked with him, it became apparent that he knew the Lord personally. Then I asked myself if we should urge him to do the *Basic Bible Studies*. They are basic, and he was a college graduate. As I was about to decide "no" I spotted a magazine of one of the false cults on Dick's coffee table, so I asked him to do the Bible studies. Don agreed to come back and go over the first study with him. They met every week and did Bible study together. Don poured his life into Dick. Dick later joined the church by profession of faith, married a wonderful Christian girl, and this last year has served as treasurer of his church.

Don may not have had the evangelistic gift, but the gifts of *encouragement* and *pastor* made him a tremendous follow-up worker, a *conserver*. Was he less valuable to God? No—he was just what God wanted him to be. Today he pastors a church.

Marlene finished my class in personal evangelism, went out on several calls, and came to me to say, "I can't do this. I can't remember all these Scriptures, and I get a headache when I think of calling on these people." I finally agreed she might not have this gift. Then I said, "Marlene, will you serve as my scout?"

She had the gift of hospitality, the unique ability to make friends, and I sensed she could develop contacts that could become prospects for the gospel. If she would bring them to me, I sensed I could share the gospel. She agreed. She delivered Easter baskets to the kids in her neighborhood, she had

SPIRITUAL DECISION PROCESS MODEL



Adapted from James Engel and H. Wilbert Norton, *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* p. 45. Copyright, 1975, Zondervan Corporation, used by permission.

the moms and dads over for dinner, she visited over the back fence, and made endless cups of coffee.

I count now four couples she has brought to church and introduced to me. Of these we have called on three, presented the gospel to them, and seen two couples pray to receive Christ. As a result, the men of these two families have become presidents of adult Sunday School classes at the church which I serve.

Was Marlene a failure because she couldn't do intensive evangelism? Oh, no! She was a *cultivator* due to her God-appointed gifts. Let us not force all our people into the same mold. The right mix of workers in your church and mine will require *cultivators, converters, and conservers*.

THE METHODS—THE RIGHT MIX

I have heard some fierce debates as to whether public or personal evangelism was the way to win people to Christ. But both public and personal evangelism are needed. Paul summed up his ministry in Ephesus: "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publically [mass evangelism] and from house to house [personal and fellowship evangelism], solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."¹⁰

Jody stood alone for God in her family. Dennis, her brother, began to attend church. He was in his 20s, an insurance salesman, and of the world. For four years I worked on my friendship to him, prayed for him, once in a while preached to him, witnessed

to him, and took him to lunch when I could barely afford it. When I left that church after nine years, Dennis still wasn't saved.

Then one Sunday night my phone rang. It was Dennis. He said, "Guess what happened to me today." I responded, "You got saved." "That's right," he said, "in the Billy Graham Crusade this afternoon." Mass evangelism brought him in, but friendship and personal evangelism prepared him. Yes, for *methods*, the right mix of *personal evangelism, fellowship evangelism, and public evangelism* is needed to do the job. Today Dennis is a minister.

In my first pastorate, new people I called on in their homes used to say to me, "You're the most sincere minister I ever met," but they never came to my church. I discovered I was saying too much, too soon and scaring them off. Eventually I saw there was a process most people went through preparing them to receive Christ.¹¹

Later, when I first came on the staff at Kansas City First Church of the Nazarene, I met Jan, a young wife, who attended our services on Sunday mornings. I mentioned that I would like to meet her husband who was not attending. Jan was fearful lest any call I might make would upset her husband. A prayer letter went to fellowship group leaders requesting prayer for our personal evangelism outreach. Ben Brown, Jan's Sunday School teacher, became very burdened in prayer for Chuck, her husband. Evelyn Smith, Allen Hall, and I went to call on Chuck and Jan. I was very fearful. It was a friendship call, we stayed only 20 minutes, we did not mention spiritual things, we only invited Chuck to church.

The next two Sundays Chuck was in church. After one service I greeted him and suggested I would like to stop by to see him again. On May 1, Tom, Laura, and I called on Chuck and Jan. The Holy Spirit opened hearts. Chuck and Jan prayed; Jesus came into their hearts, and their lives were immediately made new. On the following Sunday they both knelt at the altar at church as testimony of their commitment to Christ. Elmer Williams began to meet with them regularly to guide them as they began *Basic Bible Studies*.

A new sensitivity seemed to grip them. Chuck's language took on a new wholesomeness, Jan decided it would better glorify God if she refrained from attending the Hollywood movie she had planned to go to, and God's love so engulfed them that Chuck said their marriage moved up to honeymoon status.

May 11, Chuck joined the church by profession of faith. Jan stood beside him and renewed her membership vows in her heart.

In April of the following year, revival services were held at our church. Chuck and Jan sought and found the sanctified heart and Spirit-filled life. New evidence of concern for others was apparent—they were excited by the opportunity of teaching in vacation Bible school.

This one redeemed couple represents so much of what outreach means at a local church. There is prayer by many, a concerned Sunday School teacher, friendship calling, personal evangelism, worship

services, the altar, follow-up, fellowship groups, special services, and most of all, the faithful work of the Holy Spirit. It was not one thing—but the right mix of many methods.

Chuck and Jan are evidence of the cultivation process the apostle Paul believed in when he said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Cor. 3:6). They fit in many spots on Engel and Norton's "Spiritual Decision Process Model."

1. Chuck, who admitted in preconversion days he would have punched me in the nose if I'd offended him, was perhaps a -6. He was aware of some fundamentals of the gospel due to his Catholic background—but was hostile.

2. Cultivation took place through the friendship call and eventually helped move Chuck to a -4 position, positive attitude toward the gospel.

3. The prayer of the Sunday School teacher gave the Holy Spirit a channel for convicting Chuck.

4. Finally time was ripe for a call to decision (-2). Chuck had recognized a personal problem (-3) in his inadequate family relationships. He gave us a signal of his openness by continued church attendance and permission to call on him again. We gave him the facts of the gospel (proclamation) and specifically invited him to accept Christ (persuasion). He repented and put his faith in Christ. God made him new.

5. A trained follow-up worker met regularly to lead him through Bible study. The Word and Christian fellowship were giving him resources to resist temptation. Others became his Christian friends through our fellowship program (Links of Love). It seems, if the pressure of the world is not equalled

by the support of Christians, the convert will be lost. Chuck joined the church (+2).

6. The Holy Spirit was still working. In mass evangelism, Chuck was exposed to the Spirit's sanctifying work. There was immediate evidence of new strength and concern shown for others in service (+3).

When we realize that many will respond to God's grace as did Chuck and according to the "Spiritual Decision Process Model," we have a reason to plead for the right mix. For Chuck, the church had to have the right mix—delivery room, nursery, school, workshop. The workers—a right mix of cultivators, converters, and conservers enabled Chuck to move from rebellion to love, and workers found their place of service based on their gifts. And methods—the right mix of personal, fellowship, and mass evangelism.

FOOTNOTES

1. John Pollock, *Billy Graham: The Authorized Biography* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), p. 216.
2. Donald McGavran and Win Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 87.
3. James Engel and E. Wilbert Norton, *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), p. 13.
4. Leighton Ford, *The Christian Persuader* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 44-45.
5. Charles Shaver, *Basic Bible Studies for New/Growing Christians* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972).
6. Charles Shaver, *Conserve the Converts* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1976), p. 15.
7. Engel and Norton, p. 55.
8. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Glendale, Calif. Regal, 1976), p. 77.
9. The names of individuals have been changed to protect their privacy. The events are true.
10. Acts 20:20-21, NASB.
11. This paragraph and most of the remaining portion of this paper were presented originally at Pastors' Leadership Conferences sponsored by the Church of the Nazarene in 1977.

—THE PREACHER'S EXCHANGE—

WANTED:

The Administration of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ, by George Moberly; *Christianity and Sin*, by Robert MacIntosh; *The More Excellent Way*, by George Allen Turner; *Purity and Maturity*, by J. A. Wood; *Dr. P. F. Bresee and the Church He Founded*, by I. G. Martin; *A Prince in Israel*, E. A. Girvin; *Pentecost Rejected and the Effects on the Churches*, by A. M. Hills. Gary Skagerberg, P.O. Box N, Kirkland, WA 98033.

Scriptural Holiness, by early English authors, abridged by R. G. Flexon and published by Pilgrim Publishing House, 1948; *The Arminian Emphases*, by Dr. Roy Nicholson; *The Wesleyan Message, It's Scriptural and Historical Bases* (1940) and *The Wesleyan Message Bearing Fruit* (1942) published by Light and Life Press; *A Holiness Manifesto*, by C. W. Butler; *Insights into Holiness and Further Insights into Holiness*, by Geiger; *Elements of Theology*, by Luther Lee; *Systematic Theology*,

Vol. II, by John Miley. George M. Malone, Rte. 3, Box 69, Shoals, IN 47581.

Church of the Nazarene Manuals; any before 1919, also 1932, 1936, and 1944. Jim Norcross, 1024 Belvedere Drive, Slidell, LA 70458.

Volumes 10-14, Isaiah—Malachi, of the *Pulpit Commentary*. Clinton Fisk, 404 E. Tremont, Dayton, WA. 99328, phone 509-382-2644.

FOR SALE:

Volumes 15-18, Matthew—Romans of the *Pulpit Commentary*. Clinton Fisk, 404 E. Tremont, Dayton, WA 99328, phone 509-382-2644.

The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary, 31 volumes complete, good condition, \$175 plus shipping. Harold H. Hayes, Rte. 1, Canton, IL 61520.

New complete set, 13-volume, *Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching*, each book sealed individually in original wrap. \$150; *Exploring the Old Testament*, W. T. Purkiser, \$3.00;

Exploring the New Testament, Ralph Earle, \$3.00; *Introduction to Christian Theology*, Culbertson and Wiley, \$2.50; *Christian Theology*, Wiley, Volumes I, II, III, \$2.50 each. Many more. Will send a list on request. Bill Jetton, 150 32nd Ave. E., Tuscaloosa, Ala. 35404.

25 *Teacher's Bible School Journals*, January, 1966, to first quarter, 1977 (minus the second quarter of 1974). All in fair condition. Two-volume set, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, by A. M. Hills, 1931; *Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Old and New Testaments*, by Alexander Cruden, 1930; *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*, by F. N. Peloubet, 1913, 1925, The John C. Winston Co.; *Irwin's Bible Commentary*, C. H. Irwin, editor; *Harper's Topical Concordance*, compiled by Charles R. Joy, Revised and Enlarged; *Hurlbut's Story of the Bible for Young and Old*, by Lyman Hurlbut, 1932. Albert L. Lepley, 1526-D Oldtowne Manor, Cumberland, MD 21502.

It doesn't take long for it to destroy a body

How to Avoid Staff Infection

by Charles Mylander, Associate pastor of Rose Drive Friends Church, Yorba Linda, California

Cleta almost apologized to the pastor for what happened while he was on vacation. No surprise. She was the loyal type, the kind who for years taught Sunday School and loved every minute. Cleta was reporting on the new associate pastor. "I don't want to hurt your feelings, pastor," she began, "but Dick did a wonderful job of preaching while you were gone."

The understanding pastor slipped his arm around the elderly saint's shoulders. "Cleta," he smiled, "that just shows what good judgment we have! You wouldn't expect us to hire anyone but the best, would you?" Cleta smiled with an obvious sense of relief. Everything was all right because her pastor did not feel threatened. It was okay for the new associate to succeed.

Cleta is no fool. She simply discerns possible problems quicker than some people do. In all too many churches, staff tensions do indeed mar the fellowship and hinder growth. The "Sunday-front Syndrome," so characteristic of the uncommitted, reaches its ugly tentacles into the heart relationships of far too many church staffs. Everything looks good on Sunday, but infighting rumbles during the week. In some churches the situation deteriorates until the pastor gives nearly all his time and energy to staff direction and conflicts. The tragedy is that he has inadequate time left for personal devotions, study, and care of the members.

Yet, strange to tell, some church members believe their pastors and staff members are

immune from interpersonal tensions. On the other hand, they know pressures over secular job relationships touch virtually every working person. So why should the devil and his cohorts limit their attacks to the laity? The devil's legions take diabolical delight in a struggle for power and prestige among church staff members. What is funnier, from Satan's viewpoint, than committed Christian leaders who preach love on Sunday and stab each other in the back during the week? "Better yet," his demons giggle, "it ruins churches!"

I write as an associate pastor who feels deep satisfaction in his role. Yet real temptations and subtle pressures in two churches over an eight-year period alert me to the fact that staff tensions can strike at a church. What is worse, heart-to-heart conversations with other pastors and associates uncover a bloody path of injured victims and damaged churches. What can be done about it? Is it inevitable? Do Christian leaders not know a better way?

A working philosophy of multiple-staff relationships eliminates much of the heartache and pain. Without apology the model I propose draws from Rose Drive Friends Church in Yorba Linda, Calif., where I now serve. Its effective senior pastor, C. W. Perry, leads the way in producing an unusual harmony and loyalty among the staff. While the guidelines suggested here may not fit every church, it will serve as one example that works. It can also help church members to understand the need for firm principles

as foundations for strong staff relationships.

The senior minister sets the tone for the whole church as well as the staff. It makes little difference in terms of attitudes whether the staff is paid or volunteer. The same principles apply, at least in spirit, to small churches and large. But in his God-given position of spiritual leadership, the pastor's actions and attitudes are crucial. So consider his vital role in staff relationships first.

He walks a tightrope. On one end of his balance pole hang initiative and authority. Like Jesus and Paul with their teams, he must exercise his leadership. On the other end of his balance pole dangle his attitudes. Like the great New Testament leaders, he must remain vulnerable, tender and open. Bishop Gerald Kennedy once called it the balance between being *tough-minded* and *tender-hearted*. If the pastor leans too far either way, he loses his balance and courts disaster. Consider four practical guidelines for his important role.

First, a competent senior pastor will view each associate as a colleague, not a competitor.

The hidden pressure on a pastor's ego builds when an associate really succeeds and the church members praise him openly. Secretly, he may wonder, "What if my associate's following becomes too large?" A senior pastor is probably less than honest with himself if he does not admit feeling somewhat threatened. Take Pastor Earl and his young associate Clark, for example. In junior high, Clark ac-

cepted Christ under Pastor Earl's ministry. The discerning man of God soon sensed the Lord's gifts in the young man's life and encouraged their development. In time, Clark not only graduated from a nearby seminary but became a full-time youth director in his home church.

As the church grew and as Clark's strengths in preaching became more and more obvious, Pastor Earl asked him to become his associate pastor. A couple of years later, the church took a giant step of faith and started a daughter congregation. Clark was God's man for the new church. Pastor Earl supported him to the hilt, but later admitted his fear of losing all the young couples in the church. He knew these members near Clark's age would help launch the new congregation, but he wondered if they would deal a crippling blow to the mother church inadvertently. Some 100 young adults did make the move with the full blessing of the mother church.

Instead of cringing in fear, Pastor Earl led the mother church to move out in faith, adding staff and expanding facilities. Within a year the daughter church was healthy and growing while the mother church was averaging more people in attendance than before the new congregation started.

Not every potential staff conflict receives a Cinderella ending. A good friend of mine became an associate in an established church with a new pastor. His story is that the senior pastor used him like a servant boy. He griped about the "Carry-my-briefcase-upstairs-for-me" type of treatment. The senior pastor could see only the utter lack of loyalty by his new staff member. Soon each was criticizing the ministry of the other. The associate found allies in the personnel committee who hired him. The senior pastor appealed to the elders. At the sad end of the squabble both men left the church, hurt and blaming each other.

When an ever increasing number of people appreciate the God-given ministry of an associate, the best senior pastors feel

more secure. Instead of mentally developing some hidden fear, they take a different tack. They check threatening thoughts with sound reasoning:

"His success is *our* success. His effectiveness helps us accomplish the mission our Lord has given to *us*."

Please note the "our" and "us" vocabulary on which effective team leaders thrive. "We" replaces "I." Here at Rose Drive Friends Church, our pastor never says, "my" church. He always speaks of "our" church, "our" ministry, "our" goals. He avoids the "I, me, my" syndrome like plague. May his tribe increase!

Second, a sensitive senior pastor will build the esteem of each staff member in everyone's eyes.

Successful pastors major on credit-sharing and partnership. Both in public and private they speak of staff members with respect and appreciation. Take the matter of titles as an example. In more and more churches senior ministers are honoring permanent staff members as "Associate" or "Minister of Evangelism, Christian Education, Youth, etc." They reserve the somewhat demeaning title, "assistant" for temporary interns or seminary students fulfilling field work assignments. In a dozen other ways they build respect for each associate, establishing the idea of a permanent team.

Few church members recognize the unintentional social pressure which a capable associate receives from well-meaning people. In a complimentary tone of

voice, a friend will ask, "When are you going to have your own church?" The not-so-subtle implication is that the associate will "arrive" only when occupying the senior position. A qualified associate sometimes hears another left-handed compliment indirectly: "He won't stay; he's too good." Again the feeling tone is that the staff member is either second-rate or will become a "head pastor" in the near future.

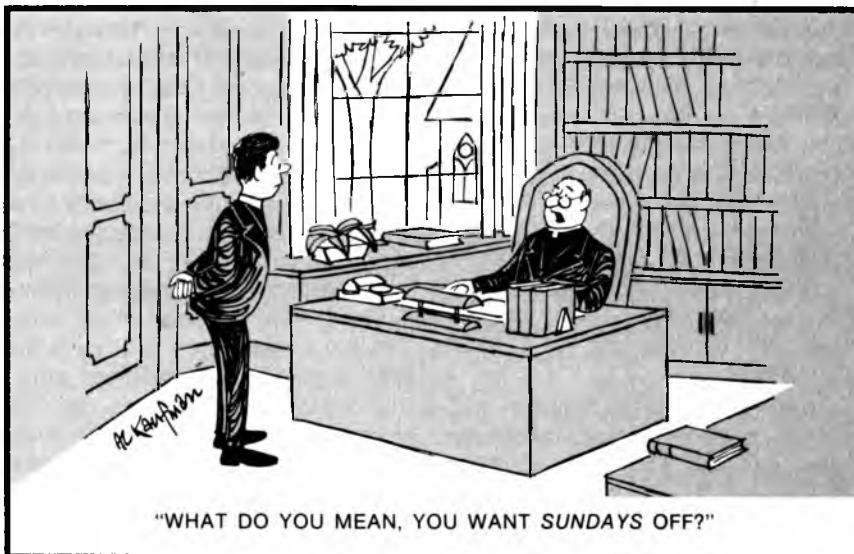
The alert associate, by the way, soon learns to put friends at ease with some common sense talk:

"I like it here. My ministry lets me do all the things I enjoy most and few of the tasks I dislike. I imagine you would like such a job, wouldn't you? I hope the Lord never calls me to another church!"

Third, a successful senior pastor will let each staff member work in his or her area of strength.

Rev. Jones was the founding pastor of a new church. God blessed his faithfulness and the church grew. In time he began looking for an associate pastor with strength in Christian education. Candidate Carl seemed to fit the need, and the church hired him. Rev. Jones's philosophy was to fit the job to the employee, not the employee to the job. He allowed each staff member to work in the kinds of ministry where he or she excelled.

Once Carl was at work, the wise Rev. Jones noted where the Lord blessed his ministry for the good of the church. As their numbers kept growing, Carl received more responsibility in the kinds of min-



"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU WANT SUNDAYS OFF?"

istry where he proved most profitable for the Kingdom. Some tasks, of course, required doing whether Carl found them enjoyable or not. But as most of his energy went into the kind of ministry he did best, the earned respect of the church members followed naturally. Rev. Jones followed the same pattern with each staff member.

Like good marriages, healthy staff relationships require constant attention. Alert senior pastors meet often with their staffs to keep communication lines open and to develop warm friendships. The best staff meetings incorporate the proper mix of worship, prayer, fellowship, brainstorming, idea testing, planning, and reporting. In this setting each staff member's areas of strength soon become obvious to the others. Bouncing ideas off other committed leaders give added insights to any plan of action. Each person can avoid pitfalls and discover new possibilities.

Finally, an outstanding senior pastor will stress financial generosity for the staff members.

He will take the initiative in speaking up for them at the time of salary review. If the senior pastor wants to keep his associates on the staff, a near starvation wage will not do. A helpful guideline is to raise the associates' salaries to as close to his own as possible. Because it spares them the humiliation of begging for a livable income, the associates will feel deep gratitude.

The senior pastor sets a constructive tone and helpful policies for a spirit of teamwork. If the staff members want God's best for the church, they will embrace his initiatives. No teamwork works without a team. The best senior pastor in the world can run into severe problems with a troublemaking staff member. For a successful team effort, the associates must practice workable principles of cooperation as well. In relationship to the senior pastor, consider four guidelines for a staff member.

First, an able associate will pray for the senior minister's success, not his job. Some years

ago I caught myself playing with a deadly daydream. I wandered down the hall to the senior pastor's office. The door stood wide open, although he was out at the moment. Stepping inside I began picturing myself sitting in his chair, occupying his large office, exercising his responsibilities. All at once I awakened to the jarring reality of my fantasy. "What am I doing?" I asked myself, knowing full well that it was the sinister sin of envy. It only took a moment to get back to work and seek the Lord's help in correcting my perspective.

Most staff members sense instinctively that their ministries will suffer if the senior minister does not succeed in his. The best way to help the senior pastor to succeed is not by desiring his position, but by each staff member doing his or her own task with excellence. An effective ministry by any staff member reflects well on the senior pastor's leadership. A church staff is like a good football team. Each member must play each position well. If one succeeds along with all the others, the team advances the ball. If one fails, the whole team loses ground. But the best players do more. They not only execute their own task with excellence but also rush to the aid of their teammates. Flexibility to seize the unexpected opportunity on any play is a mark of greatness.

Second, an effective associate will always remember that he or she is an assistant. The associate will not want to be called an assistant, nor treated like one. Yet he or she knows, if perceptive, that a first priority is to assist the senior pastor. Each senior minister somehow communicates the special ways he likes or expects assistance. It may mean preaching during his absence, relieving some part of his work load, or confirming his good ideas for the church's future. A helpful staff member will do his or her best, regardless of what personal limitations might be felt.

A little assistance makes a big difference. A husband may move the heaviest furniture in the house. But when moving an awkward mattress a helping hand

from his wife lightens his load immensely: While camping, a father may have the strength to carry a small log by himself. But if his strapping young son grabs hold of the other end, log carrying turns from drudgery into pleasure. So a church staff member can give some relief to an overworked senior pastor by assisting cheerfully.

Third, a qualified associate will let the boss be the boss. He or she will not try to take over the helm of the ship, nor grab the wheel. Two churches in our denomination are going through traumatic times because someone ignored this simple principle. In one church two men shared the pastorate. They tried to cooperate and let each major in his own strengths. Both were capable with proven records of effectiveness. But a church with two bosses is a two-headed monster. Both pastors soon resigned.

The other church just went through a painful split. An emotional issue is catching the attention, but it is only the flag on the mountain. Beneath it lies a deeper reason. Two leaders were developing two different philosophies of ministry for several years. Two styles of ministry meant two followings in the same church. When the boss was not the boss it led to inevitable conflict.

By way of contrast, every staff member needs to think through the Bible's teaching on authority, spiritual gifts, and loyalty. A Spirit-filled associate should find nothing more satisfying than fulfilling the desires of the one in authority. In fact, the efficient worker, through discipline, will make "quick to respond" a professional motto.

Finally, an outstanding associate will remain loyal when others criticize the senior minister. Most criticism contains a grain of truth, however distorted and exaggerated the facts. The temptation to lend an understanding ear is ever present. Some church members will try to manipulate a situation by communicating dissatisfactions indirectly through a staff member. But one can avoid

(Continued on page 61)



THE DREAM

by C J Stodola

As a young girl, I often dreamed that one day I would be a pastor's wife. "There's no way you can pick out a minister!" My friends laughed. But as I became a teenager, I was convinced that God was calling me to be just that—a preacher's wife.

I did become the wife of that preacher of my dreams, but I had many lessons to learn over the years. At our first pastorate, we traveled 40 miles to a little basement church twice a week, and 40 miles back home again. We "wore" out four cars in one year. My very young husband stepped into the pulpit that first Sunday to preach to only one old man and our family of three. My dream was unfolding. I soon realized there was not much glamour, but mostly sacrifice.

I learned to love our first sanctuary, even with its musty and moldy basement smell and the buckets of water we mopped up on rainy Sunday mornings. My heart saddened as I visited impoverished homes that lacked indoor plumbing. I saw poor people work long hours, and I laughed with old men who told funny stories. I listened to wisdom that sometimes spanned lifetimes of 80 or 90 years, and I hung on to those words, wishing I could remember them longer.

Once I sparkled up the house to entertain a great man of God. I heard him laugh and saw the human side of this serious man of the pulpit. I delighted in catching little bits of wisdom that came from his lips, and then watched in embarrassment as he brushed long strands of white dog fur from his navy blue suit.

At another pastorate I nearly lost my dream. Over a hundred people accepted Christ, and I walked around in an emotional high. It was exciting to hear how they loved Jesus, and how He was changing their lives so much for the better. I rejoiced with rosy-cheeked children who began to smile because Mommy's and Daddy's lives were different now.

Then I descended to the depths of despair and watched helplessly as tongues lashed out like cruel knives at the imperfections of these new "babes" in Christ. I cried out, not understanding why, one by

one, almost every newly born-again person was driven back into his old ways or out of the church by hurtful, unfeeling words. I watched the despair in my husband's eyes. I experienced his deep depression as I heard him vainly trying to pick up the pieces. And finally with desperation, we sold all of our possessions and went back to school (really to get away from the pressures of the pastorate). We were defeated.

Now at another place and another time, the hurt is almost forgotten. It is tucked away in the far corner of my mind because I am much too busy to dwell on the might-have-beens or even the could-bes. Tomorrow I must teach a class of beautiful, vibrant young people, who are hungering and thirsting for God. I must have the words that will prepare them for a life with Christ, yes, and a life of uncertainty. Will they grasp enough strength from a caring and loving God to help them over rough spots in their lives? God help me.

I hear a knock, and open the door to Charles, a 15-year-old who has ridden his bike 18 miles in order to be in the service tonight. I feed him food brought over by someone in my congregation. My eyes fall on the many gifts of love scattered about; an oil lamp, especially chosen because I like red, a plaque fashioned by the hands of a young girl, paper flowers made especially for me by a dimple-cheeked child. I humbly remember when the ladies from my church washed dirty dishes the week I was sick.

Where are those sacrifices? There is only joy that God has allowed my dream to come true. He has helped me to realize that this is His church. He is in control. Whatever happens, I work for God, not man. I learn again and again to fasten my eyes upon Jesus, and never to look away from Him. I am learning that prayer and God's Word become more and more important to success as a woman of God, and as a pastor's wife. Mostly I thank God that He allowed a 19-year-old child bride to begin the difficult, but oh, so rewarding vocation of "preacher's wife."



WHAT IS HOLINESS PREACHING?

by Richard S. Taylor

Perhaps we should begin with a threefold summary. Holiness preaching is the *declaration of the divine standard*, the *proclamation of the divine power*, and the *exposition of the divine processes*. The standard is related to what is expected, the power to what is possible, and the processes to personal experience.

When the man in the pulpit makes perfectly clear the kind of life God designs, the Spirit working in the pew can then create self-knowledge and hunger. When this same preacher proclaims the power of God in Christ to cleanse and enable, his listeners are inspired to believe in holiness as a personal possibility. But the man of God is not yet a competent holiness preacher until he so explains the way *in* that people under his preaching are *finding* their way in.

Such holiness preaching requires much prayer, study, labor, and courage. It is the most difficult and exacting demand in one's ministry. The intelligence must be capable of grasping fine distinctions and making them clear to ordinary folk. The spirit must be impelled by a profound conviction of truth and an equally deep sense of urgency. The personality must be radiant with the anointing which turns articulation into communication, and which guides winged arrows of truth straight to the heart.

I

As for the divine standard, it is easily found in the Scriptures. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Ps. 24:3-4). Why did David pray for a clean heart and a right spirit? Because he perceived the standard—"Thou desirest truth in the inward parts" (Ps. 51:6).

Micah sorted it all out and brought the central thing into focus. He said, "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8). Forms can so easily become substitutes for reality, and divert attention from the main central thrust of it all, which in itself is very simple. *This* is what God really requires. No matter how ornate our buildings, or elaborate our ritual, or meticulous our performance, if we miss this, we have settled for mere religious scaffolding.

We hear the declaration of the divine standard over and over in the New Testament. If "the pure in heart" are blessed because they will see God, then purity of heart is God's standard for seeing God (Matt. 5:8). And what an ultimatum this is: "Except

your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Or this: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). How important it is that the preacher should possess this perspective!

The solemn pronouncement of Hebrews 12:14 that holiness is the indispensable requirement for seeing the Lord is not the offbeat notion of a maverick writer; it is the epitome of the entire New Testament—indeed, of the entire Bible. Holiness preaching is first of all, therefore, the declaration of this divine standard.

II

But it is also the *proclamation of divine power*. Bob Schuller talks about "possibility thinking." The holiness preacher must learn the art of possibility preaching. What are the possibilities of grace? I have a sermon with the rather colloquial title, "How Holy Can We Get?" Of course, much depends on how holy we want to get. But there are people in this world who really long to be holy, who have been squelched and ridiculed by little preachers who had a little god who dispensed only a little grace; preachers who dampened hopes rather than igniting them.

Does our preaching build faith? When people listen to us, are they prompted to exclaim, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"? (Matt. 8:2). If people keep listening to us, will they experience a rise of confidence in the adequacy of grace for *them*, with their specific problems and handicaps?

Let us affirm the power of the Holy Spirit to search and locate. While the Spirit can search a sensitive soul without the preacher, most people are not that spiritually alert. We need, therefore, to preach in such a way that the Holy Spirit through us can expose the secret roots of unbelief, self-willfulness, covetousness, and hardheartedness, and reveal them as the sinful, ugly traits of the carnal mind which they really are.

But let us also describe the blessings of the holy heart—the inner peace, the quiet rest, the unity within, the deep vibrations of holy joy. People need to be brought to the confession, "I have the marks of carnality, but I do not enjoy the marks of full holiness."

True enough, we should avoid overstating the case in either direction. We must not paint such a

picture of faultlessness and mature saintliness that tenderhearted listeners "cast away their confidence" every time they hear us preach. In our zeal to shock and jolt the entrenched deadhead, let us take care lest we unsettle the super-conscientious. Yet we must not be so tentative and timid that our preaching rocks people to sleep instead of out of it.

But if we only locate people, we fall short of the mark. For Christians to see their carnality without at the same time seeing its cure is a sure road to despair. Preaching should direct attention to the promises of the Bible and to the provision of the Cross. It should build a quiet inner certainty that the Spirit who called can cleanse; who uncovered the infection can heal it. The gospel includes no better news than that the Holy Spirit can unify a divided heart, quiet a restless heart, purge an unholy heart, and satisfy a longing heart.

III

But we dare not sidestep the task of explaining processes. Here we deal with firstness and secondness, of consecration, faith, and the witness of the Spirit. We must trace carefully the steps and the stages, so that the pilgrim will expect neither too much nor too little at any particular stage. Not only *works* of grace but the *nurture* of grace requires constant attention.

In recent years there has developed in the holiness movement a tendency to decry preaching which seeks to define method. The reaction has not been totally without reason. It is very easy for instructions to become so standardized that they prove to be straitjackets to the seeker, or else worse yet a turnstile which will let one in if only the right coin is dropped in the slot.

Methods preaching should give enough guidance to point directions, but not enough to constitute a regimentation of the Holy Spirit. We must leave room for the Holy Spirit to lead by unexpected routes and means, and for His secret dealings with the soul to be as various as the persons with whom He is dealing. As no two snowflakes are identical, so no two experiences of entire sanctification are identical in all details. Especially suspect are the methods which permit an altar worker to engineer a profession of holiness through a series of neat syllogistic steps.

The Spirit is the guide into all truth, not the Christian worker. We can take the seeker only so far, then the Spirit bows us out. This may be the reason why many who seek first at a public altar finally break through at home, or in the car, or even on the job.

Yet in spite of these very real perils, we cannot cop out completely as guides. The Holy Spirit may go beyond our preaching, but He generally begins with it, and works through it. If the Spirit didn't need us, why call us to preach at all? No, the communication of truth by man to man is God's ordained plan, and that surely includes the communication of basic divine processes.

There is a sequence in the divine working with men and women. Awakening and conviction precede repentance and faith. Repentance and faith precede the new birth. The new birth precedes the Christian life. Christian life precedes the discovery of carnality. The discovery of carnality precipitates an acute longing for full holiness. A deep desire leads to a crisis of surrender and consecration and self-crucifixion. This crisis issues in a Spirit-energized faith that walks into the blessing and brings the inner release and confirmation. The release and confirmation set one singing on the highway and real progress begins. Progress leads to subcrises of divine discipline and molding and further self-discovery, which carry us higher and farther along the way to maturity, saintliness, and usefulness.

Now this sequence is essentially uniform and universal. When a mild Calvinist such as V. Raymond Edman traces the stages of the way (cf. *They Found the Secret*), this is, by and large, the path. Each of the two major crises is preceded by preparation of the Spirit and involves personal requirements and conditions. This is the divine movement, from God to man and man to God—the gracious shuttle of the Divine Weaver. It is this which keeps the relationship personal, dynamic, and thoroughly moral at every stage.

Now our preaching should so illumine this sequence that our listeners learn to think in these terms. Even the unconverted who hear us often will become aware that if they are to be saved they must meet certain conditions, and that after being converted there is a subsequent experience toward which they should move from the very start, which also involves definite conditions.

Neither can we avoid altogether being even more specific and getting down to infant steps to aid a spiritual toddler. I knew a woman who had learned that one could be saved. The term became alive with meaning to her; but she did not know how to be saved. She went from church to church, slipping into the back seat to listen eagerly for simple instructions. Finally she heard the sermon that made the way clear and she was almost instantly at the altar.

After a year of great exuberance and exciting religious activity, she became keenly aware of a lurking doublemindedness. She heard of sanctification, and again began making the rounds. She went to the holiness churches, but received no directions. Another year passed when one Monday night an evangelist laid aside the planned masterpiece and in simple ABC form explained the steps to the blessing. Again she was at the altar before a song could be sung. She was the kind of a person who couldn't seem to find her own way. She needed someone in the pulpit who could verbally take her by the hand.

We can avoid stereotyping holiness, and avoid dry mechanics and manipulation, yet be faithful preachers who explain the divine processes as well as declare the divine standard and proclaim the divine power. This, too, is part of the answer to the question, "What is holiness preaching?"



UNHOLY TEMPERS

by George E. Failing*

John Wesley speaks of love as the fountain of all holy tempers, specifically tempers of meekness, humility, and the quality of being "easy to be entreated" (James 3:17). Among the wealthy men that Wesley knew over a period of 70 years, he could not recall meeting even 10 men of such holy tempers (*Works VII*, 217).

Even though we agree with Wesley that riches are a hindrance to the very first fruit of faith, the love of God, we may observe that unholy tempers proceed from the evil heart, the carnal mind, and may as easily be associated with pride, love of power, and the favor of men as with the love of wealth.

In the *Protestant Pulpit* (39 sermons compiled by Andrew W. Blackwood, published in paperback by Baker), appears one of the greatest sermons I ever read on the "Forgiveness of Sins." The preacher passes quickly over such gross iniquities as murder, robbery, sensuality, drunkenness. To such plainly admitted sins he calls attention to (1) the sins of temperament, such as sullenness, vindictiveness, peevishness, jealousy, bad temper; (2) the sins of social attitudes, such as greed for money and power at the expense of others; (3) the sins of neglect, such as the letters we

do not write, the apologies we do not make, the prayers we do not pray, the good we do not do.

I suppose the point that may need to be made is this, namely, that these are unholy tempers of *people*, not unholy tempers of the *sinner* (or the *justified believer* only!). Unless or until a person attains a state or condition where he cannot be tempted and he cannot sin, he may be provoked to an unholy temper. And if he has freedom to respond, he may yield to an unholy temper.

We do know many virtues of the Pharisee who went up into the temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14): "I am not an extortioner, unjust, an adulterer; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I get."* Yet Jesus exposed the basic unholy temper of the Pharisee: "I thank thee, God, that I am not as the rest of men . . . or even as this publican."* Because of this pride, the Pharisee went down to his house condemned, not justified. In a far better condition to receive the mercy of God was the publican whose one great lament was, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." A person dare not be satisfied with living unjustly, nor dare he call himself a saint.

Unholy tempers require both pardon and cleansing. Unholy tempers cannot really be concealed from God, nor always from all men. And because they are unholy in intention and exhibition, they need forgiveness. Why is it less wholesome or less necessary to request forgiveness for greed or jealousy than for idolatry and dishonesty? Because these tempers hurt other people, they need forgiveness.


*Author's own translation.

But unholy tempers also need cleansing. The Wise Man taught that "the thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. 24:9); he also taught that the Lord hates "a heart that devises evil purposes" (Prov. 6:18).

Even the passage of a thought or impulse of evil across the heart leaves its impurity. The conscience so often guilty of "dead works" needs to be cleansed (Heb. 9:14). So we are promised that "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). The immediate context indicates that this sin we are cleansed from particularly is the sin of not walking in the light as he is in the light, i.e., not living in momentary, loving, and complete obedience to God's will.

For John Wesley, entering "into a formal controversy would be a wilful sin." So what does John Wesley teach? "The proposition which I will hold is this: 'A person may be cleansed from all sinful tempers, and yet need the atoning blood.' For what? For 'negligences and ignorances,' for both words and actions (as well as omissions) which are, in a sense, transgressions of the perfect law. And I believe that no one is clear of these till he lays down this corruptible body" (*Works XII*, 241).

For revealed sinful tempers we need to admit guilt and plead for complete cleansing. For inadvertent negligences and ignorances, the atoning blood is applied though there can be no confession of these, since they are "secret faults."

These are positive, strong, and wholesome positions on unholy tempers, would you not agree? 

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Cult, Occult, and Apostasy

by Norman N. Bonner

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The propositions examined in this study are four-fold. First, there are hemispheres of biblical truth which need to merge into a full-orbed sphere of truth—overemphasis on either hemisphere may lead to heterodoxy. Secondly, there is a tendency to drift from orthodoxy in one or more areas of fundamental biblical truth which may lead to heterodoxy, which, if continued, may result in final apostasy. Thirdly, the cultic tends to separate one from the church, and thus removed from the safeguards of orthodoxy, the drift may continue toward occultism. Finally, there is a need for Christians within the church to examine themselves in the light of orthodox truth to determine if tendencies toward the cultic exist, and, if so, to flee quickly to the Word of God, the single citadel of truth.

DEFINITIONS

The term "sect," derived from the Latin "Sequi," meaning "to follow," may describe any dissenting or schismatic religious body, which may or may not have parted company with a longer-established communion.¹ It is not this concept with which this paper is concerned.

The term "cult" which will be the focus of this paper, has a more restricted meaning. It is described as a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious; also a minority religious group holding beliefs regarded as unorthodox or spurious.² The cultic represents a major deviation from Orthodox Christianity in one or more areas.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CULT

In his book *The Four Major Cults*, Anthony A. Hoekema traces the distinctive traits of the cult. He draws quite heavily from the work by the Lutheran theologian Kurt Hutten, which appeared in German in 1957 under the title, *Die Glaubenswelt des Sektierers*, (The Faith-world of the Sectarian). Some

of these characteristics, listed below, are drawn from this source and will be documented from Hoekema's book (pages 373-403).

1. A break with historic Christianity. Hoekema states, "There is, in all cults, an abrupt break with historic Christianity and with its confessions."³ For this reason, Christians need to take heed to the creeds, confessions, and disciplines of historic Christianity, as well as the lessons learned from church history.

2. A tendency to major in minors. "Cultists tend to take certain peripheral truths (or teachings which are held to be truths) and to elevate them to a prominence far greater than they deserve, whereas matters of major importance are played down."⁴

3. A tendency toward unhealthy perfectionism. This is defined as "a feeling of superior holiness to those in other groups, particularly to the members of the established church."⁵ For example, "Jehovah's witnesses claim that they are more obedient to God than ordinary church members since they do far more door-to-door witnessing than the latter."⁶

4. An extra-scriptural source of authority. This is the question of "ultimate authority." Is the Bible, in itself, sufficient, or do we need some other source to shed light on God's Word? This "extra-scriptural source" may be dreams, as experienced by noted cultists including Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy; or second Bible, as the *Book of Mormon*, *Pearl of Great Price*, and *Doctrine and Covenants*, of the Mormon Church; or *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, of the Christian Scientists; or the teachings of the 144,000 (anointed class) of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Kurt Hutten found that in every cult studied, the ultimate ground of authority rested in some extra-scriptural source. He called this "the Bible in the left hand."⁷

5. The denial of justification by grace alone (Eph. 2:8-9). "Faith is no longer considered as the

free gift of God to the unworthy sinner, but a reward which has been earned by the faithful keeping of various conditions and requirements.”⁸ Hutten calls this the most basic trait of the cultists, and against this he cites the Reformation as asserting the principle of “Sole gratia”—“man is saved by grace alone.”

6. The devaluation of Christ. Salvation for the cultist is not determined by the grace of God revealed in the cross of Christ, but the cultist assumes a determinative role in the distribution of salvation. Hutten calls this a “shifting of emphasis, and does not necessarily mean a complete denial of Christ’s mission and work, but does result in a minimizing of Christ’s role as the only Mediator between God and man.”⁹

7. A denial of the person, personality, and personal ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is a dangerous characteristic as the Holy Spirit serves as our medium of communication with the eternal Godhead. The Scripture represents the Holy Spirit as a person, even as the Father and Son are persons. John 14:16-17: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth *him*.” John 15:26: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.” John 16:13: “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are spoken of as persons, not principles. If God is a person and Jesus Christ is a person, the Holy Spirit must be a person. Personal pronouns are used of all three members of the Godhead. If Jesus, a person, is a Counselor, and if the Holy Spirit is a Counselor, He must be a person. He can be grieved, He speaks, He convicts, He teaches, He convinces, He comes, He goes, He departs, He enters. All these are qualities of personhood. If we deny that quality to the Holy Spirit, we must deny it to the other members of the Godhead, and what do we have—a nebulous “something.” First John 5:7 states, “There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

8. The cultic group as the Exclusive Community of the Saved. Hutten points out that the anti-church polemic, which is so characteristic of the cult, is but the converse side of its own justification. This is, “I only have the receptacle of truth, all others are wrong. Since the cult is convinced that it is the only true community of God’s people, it must try to show that the church is either an apostate organization or an actual instrument of the devil.”¹⁰ There is among the cults no appreciation for the biblical doctrine of “one holy catholic church,” that is, of the universal Church of Christ, composed of Christ’s true people of all ages and from all nations. Every cult says, “We alone are the people of God.”¹¹

9. The claim to new insights, or new revelations of truth. These new truths, according to the cultist,

are not available to ordinary believers. This is one of the most dangerous traits of the cultist and leads to spiritual pride. Anyone, basing his teaching on such premises, can teach about anything and substantiate such teachings with portions of the Word.

10. Proof-texting to substantiate doctrine. This is the tendency to place strong emphasis on meanings, or shades of meanings, of words, terms, single verses, etc., without taking into consideration the “general tenor of the Scripture,” including text, context, study of parallel passages, comparative analysis, and use of the hermeneutical principles of sound biblical exegesis. This is sometimes called “the knight-errant method,” leaping from verse to verse to bolster one’s peculiar belief. This is “subjective” rather than “objective” biblical study. One approaches the Word with a set of presuppositions rather than asking, “What does the Bible teach apart from presuppositions?” The proper approach to Bible study should be inductive as well as deductive.

11. Door-to-door visitation versus public proclamation. Paul said, “. . . it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” This is not to diminish witnessing and discipleship, but a call to proclamation with its supporting ministries.

12. Emphasizing teaching and training every member to become a missionary of the movement rather than emphasizing preaching and worship. Teaching and training are good, but must not preclude proclamation and fellowship. Body life in the church includes four elements: “kerygma” (worship), “koinonia” (fellowship), “diakonia” (service), and “didaskonia” (teaching or training).

13. Separation from the body of believers. Granted that Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). This is a hemisphere of truth. The other hemisphere is: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). The exhortation is: “And let us consider one another to provoke to love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24).

14. A persecution complex. The cultist thrives on what appears to him to be persecution. A cultist said: (1) doors were slammed in my face, that made me feel good; (2) some argued heatedly and beligerently, that confirmed my faith; (3) others gave personal testimony, I thought about this when I went to bed at night.

15. Avoiding public prayer. The cultist dislikes public praying. God’s true saints love to pray together. “These all continued together with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 12:5). Some cultists pray ecstatically, other “mutter.” Muttering is associated with demons in the Bible. “And when they say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that *mutter*: should not a people seek unto their God?” (Isa. 8:19). And, “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that

(Continued on next page)



In the "Preacher's Magazine" 50 Years Ago

SALT FROM MY ATTIC

Monotony is the dagger which kills the virtue of attention.

Questioning is a cheap thing; 'tis answering that costs.

We all have our Iliads, but alas! none of us are Homers.

When thought causes a disease, thought is the medicine to cure it.

The Roman swore by the altar of his gods; the American has his newspaper.

You say all ideas are old; so is all marble, but who will deny that new statues are cut?

The works of many common men come down to us, because those men lived in the age of great men, as flies are embalmed in amber.

—John A. Shedd.
April, 1931

A MAN IN CHRIST

Text—"I knew a man in Christ" (2 Cor. 12:1).

There are seven characteristics of a man in Christ.

1. He had his sins pardoned (Col. 2:10-13).

2. He is cleansed from inbred sin (1 John 1:5-9).

3. He is filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18-20).

4. He bears fruit to the glory of God (John 15:1-8; Gal. 5:22-23).

5. He is a soul winner (1 Cor. 9:16-22).

6. He renders Christian service (Matt. 20:28; Gal. 6:10; Jas. 1:27).

7. He prevails in prayer (John 15:7; 2 Cor. 1:20).

—Selected.
July 1931

A NOTED TRAVELER'S OBSERVATION

Dr. Michail Dorizas—explorer, athlete, and college professor, who has traveled the world over, especially the wildest and remote corners of the universe—told his many thrilling adventures in the *American* magazine.

Summing up in answer to questions, Dr. Dorizas says:

The most hospitable people in the world are the mountaineers.

The politest people in the world are the French; they are the best cooks.

The most contented people in the world are the Mohammedans.

The most beautiful women found anywhere, are found in the little South American country of Uruguay. America and England have the most old maids.

The Japanese are the most cleanly people; the Mongols are the dirtiest.

The most melancholy people in the world are the Russians.

The Albanians are the most diffident, and the Greeks the most democratic.

The most fearless men, as a class, to be found in the world are English officers.

The Americans are the most generous and the most prosperous.

—C. E. Cornell
July 1931

(Continued from previous page)

it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity. Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath *muttered* perverseness" (Isa. 59:1-3).

16. Emphasis on wrath and judgment rather than love and mercy. The cultist would call down God's wrath and judgment on those who do not follow their teaching rather than present to them the proffers of God's love and mercy, remembering that He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. Here, again, are hemispheres of truth. God is a God of wrath and judgment; He is also a God of love and mercy. These concepts merge at the Cross of Calvary in a full-orbed sphere of truth. "And now I beseech thee . . . that we love one another. . . . For many deceivers are come into the world . . . He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 5, 7, 9).

There is a narrow borderline in the world of the supernatural. When one crosses that line, love can

turn to hate, godliness to godlessness, light to darkness, Spirit-control to demon-possession. It is easy for the cultic to move into the occult, the "seer" to become the "wizard," the "prophet" to become the "false prophet," and "praying" to degenerate into "muttering." The Christian needs the comfort, fellowship, and mutual burden-bearing of the saints; the leadership of the Holy Spirit; the guidelines of the Word of God. Apart from these safeguards, one is in danger of drifting into the cultic, then the occult, then apostasy. John the Beloved exhorts, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4:1-2).

FOOTNOTES

1. Webster's Third New International Dictionary
2. Ibid., meaning number 4.
3. *The Four Major Cults*, Anthony A. Hoekema, p. 374.
4. Ibid., p. 375.
5. Ibid., p. 376.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 379.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., pp. 394-96.
10. Hoekema, pg. 384.
11. Ibid.

Mark R. Moore



WHAT HOLINESS DENOMINATIONS ARE DOING ABOUT CONTINUING EDUCATION

Dialogs about the Practice of Ministry Conducted by Mark R. Moore, Executive Director,
Department of Education and the Ministry, Church of the Nazarene.



Lee Haines



Jack Motweiler



Lawrence
Schoenhals



John M. Nielson

Recently the directors of continuing education for the Church of the Nazarene, The Wesleyan Church, and the Free Methodist Church got together to talk over and share plans and ideas. Participating were Jack Motweiler, director of Special Ministries, the Free Methodist Church; Lawrence Schoenhals, director of Higher Education, the Free Methodist Church; Lee Haines, general secretary, Department of Education and the Ministry, The Wesleyan Church; John M. Nielson, director of Ministerial Development, Church of the Nazarene; and Mark R. Moore, executive director, Department of Education and the Ministry, Church of the Nazarene. Here's part of that conversation.

Mark Moore: Jack, what is the status of continuing education in the Free Methodist church?

Jack Motweiler: Several interesting things are happening. Dr. Schoenhals has overseen the whole area of ministerial training for us. Now that he is retiring, I have been given the continuing education as part of my "special ministries" job description. I'm very much interested in this area. I'm finishing my doctorate at Indiana University in adult education. My dissertation, which is well under way, includes a diagnostic questionnaire which a minister can take and evaluate for himself what he needs to study.

Moore: That sounds like a sound idea—self-analysis based on felt need. That's better than an arbitrary course required of everybody.

Motweiler: As a basic for developing this diagnostic tool, I did a pastor's survey of our denomination. Seventy-four percent of the pastors responded. It was a sort of needs survey. It covered financing, promotion, denominational relationships, communication, preaching—everything. The survey had 64 statements which dealt with some as-

pect of pastoral ministry. The respondents rated each one on a 1 to 5 continuum as to its importance in his ministry. This is the start of constructing a self-diagnostic instrument that will give us a lot of guidance for future C.E. programs.

Free Methodists: Compulsory CEUs?

Lawrence Schoenhals: Our bishops and General Conference are highly interested in continuing education for ministers as their recent legislation shows.

Motweiler: Yes, two years ago I presented a plan to the Board of Administration which recommended a mandatory program of continuing education for pastors. The plan called for the district superintendents to work out a five-year plan of continuing education with every pastor. It also provided that the bishops supervise a continuing education program for district superintendents. This plan of mandatory C.E. was adopted without resistance. By the time it got through general Conference, however, the "mandatory" language was changed to "strongly recommend three CEUs in three years" or something like that.

Moore: How has the legislation been carried out?

Motweiler: Well, during 1980 we offered several CEU seminars here in Winona Lake at the International Friendship House. We had seminars on inductive Bible study, leadership, church administration, homiletics, and system-

matic theology. Some of these were offered in cooperation with Asbury Theological Seminary. During January, 1981, seminars in Christian education, Free Methodist studies, Bible study, church history, theology, Old Testament, and church music are being offered.

Schoenhals: I should emphasize, too, the vigorous program of continuing education which our bishops have led during 1980. They supervised ministerial workshops throughout the country. We are getting good reports on these. They resemble your PALCON program to a certain extent. Are you continuing the PALCON idea, Dr. Moore?

Nazarenes: PALCON II and AMS

Moore: Yes, it's our biggest continuing education thrust for 1981. PALCON stands for Preachers' And Leaders' Conference. It is a program designed to update and upgrade the skills of our ministers and to do it in an inspirational manner. Our first conferences four years ago were well received. Popular demand has required that we repeat and broaden the program.

Nielson: This year's program will focus on holiness preaching, holiness theology, and holiness discipleship. In addition, there will be numerous workshops offered to meet specific needs or develop specific skills. These conferences are scheduled on our college campuses in the U.S., Canada, and Europe during the late spring and summer of 1981. In April we will be at Canadian Nazarene College; in June, at Bethany Nazarene College, Mount Vernon Nazarene College, Olivet Nazarene College, and Eastern Nazarene College; during July, Trevecca Nazarene College and Mid-America Nazarene College; and in August, at Northwest Nazarene College and Point Loma College. European dates have not been set yet.

Moore: Four years ago, PALCON was geared almost exclusively to pastors. But PALCON II is aimed at all ministers—pastors, evangelists, educators, and staff ministers. We hope every minister in the church will be involved.

Nielson: We also have an ongoing program called AMS. It's a system of Advanced Ministerial Studies. It is a non-degree program for already ordained ministers. It is built on the CEU—*Continuing Education Unit*—of credit. This is the standard unit for nondegree programs which are designed for the educational upgrading of professional people.

Each CEU represents 10 contact hours in a planned course under competent instruction, or 20-30 hours of home study.

Jack Motweiler: Do the students just take anything they choose, or is there a certain sequence?

Nielson: There is a good deal of self-design in the program. Ideally the student engages in a series of CEUs which will bring about mastery of a certain skill, or body of knowledge. However, the AMS courses need not be clustered in any one area.

Lee Haines: How does he go about earning such credits?

Nielson: There are several ways. A person can get CEU credit from on-campus or extension classes set up to meet CEU requirements, or special seminars set up by districts or by the general church, or even courses in non-Nazarene colleges or universities. A minister can even privately design a reading and ministry program of his own.

In addition we offer 11 home study courses, ranging from a study of cults and the occult, to the doctrine of atonement. For each 10 CEUs a minister is given an AMS certificate. Usually this is presented at the District Assembly

Moore: One major element in our on-going continuing education thrust is related to the CEUs offered through the King Conference Center which is a modern two-story motel-type facility, at the Nazarene International Headquarters complex. It has a lounge with a fireplace, two lecture rooms with various video facilities available. Each of the 19 rooms has a private bath, two double beds, and study areas.

Here we are offering quite a variety of CE opportunities—everything from church music, and campus ministries to pastoral leadership and Sunday School growth. A four-day seminar costs the student \$125, a two-day seminar is \$70.00. This includes room, two meals a day, materials, and registration.

Nielson: We are in the process of reevaluating our entire program of continuing education in an attempt to develop a comprehensive, coordinated program that will be forward-looking enough to meet the needs of both our ministers and laymen for years to come. Such a program would involve our institutions of higher learning, our districts, and our local churches as well as our general church. We are anxious to have as much input into that process as is possible.

Moore: Lee, what continuing education plans do Wesleyans have in the works?

Lee Haines: Well, "in the works" is a good way to describe it. As you know I recently left Marion College to head up our Department of Education and the Ministry. Continuing education for ministers is part of my assignment and I'm just getting into it. I'm making some proposals to our General Board of Administration soon.

Moore: What are some of those proposals?

Haines: We will spell out a definite program during the spring of 1981. Right now our goals include incorporating into our program existing college programs such as area ministerial conventions, ministerial refreshers, and special lecture series. We also hope to plug into certain district retreats, conventions, and seminars. We will try to mold general church programs and workshops into this picture as well.

Wesleyans: Ministerial Roles of the 80s and 90s

We also hope to develop some new programs using college campuses and certain district conference centers or local churches as regional sites for continuing education.

I am also recommending that we develop CEU video cassette or video disc courses of study. Also we will encourage pastors to take advantage of parachurch and interdenominational educational opportunities. I am also interested in exploring the possibilities of cooperative efforts in continuing education with other holiness denominations.

Motweiler: What about private or self-designed programs?

Haines: Yes, I'm recommending some special reading programs as well as a "still-to-be-thought-out" system of peer group studies in which ministers help each other study.

I'm doing my doctoral thesis on the ministry roles demanded by the 80s and 90s and I'm hoping to develop some precise ideas and programs to help our ministers do an even better job.

Moore: I think that's what all of us hope to do—provide the vehicles by which all of our ministers can improve the effectiveness of their ministry for Christ.



Worth Reading Twice:

THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE LOVE OF GOD

by Alex Deasley*



INTRODUCTION

This passage, with all of its stupendous eloquence, marks the climax of the first half of the Epistle to the Romans. Everything that Paul has said in the Epistle, up to this point, finds its focus here. All that he has said about man as the willing victim of sin finds its focus here. All that he has said about God's justifying grace in Jesus Christ through which he has brought rebellious man into a restored relationship with himself finds its focus here. All that he has said about the power of God to sanctify through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit finds its focus here.

This is the substance of the question which he is asking us to consider at this point in the Epistle—"What shall we say then to these things?"** And we might well respond to that question with another question—"What indeed shall we say to these things?" It is hard to frame an answer that would be adequate to all of these things in their monumental scale and their far-reaching implications. And, in fact, Paul does not frame an answer either.

He answers his own question with three more questions. For these closing verses of the eighth chapter are really structured around three central questions, which constitute Paul's response to the first question—"What shall we say to these things?" I know that if one looks from the strictly statistical and grammatical point of view, there are far more than simply three questions. Paul has almost lost control of the punctuation at this point and with reckless abandon, he scatters question marks right, left, and center throughout these closing verses. But centrally, there are three questions, which together constitute his answer to this question as to what is the only possible response to all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

I. WHO SHALL BE AGAINST US? (v. 31)

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, with his characteristically Welsh acidity, says that Paul must have been smitten with Englishness when he wrote this 31st verse, because he says, "If God be for us, who shall be against us?" With the tentativeness that Lloyd-Jones regards as being characteristically English, Paul uses the conditional when in fact he means the indicative. For what he is really saying here is not that there is any uncertainty as to whether God

is for us; it is an affirmation that he is making here—a stupendous affirmation; the affirmation that God is for us.

It can be rather important at times to know who is for you and who is against you. At the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919, Britain was represented by two men—by David Lloyd George, the prime minister, and Arthur James Balfour, his foreign secretary, an ex-prime minister, but also one of the most distinguished British philosophers of his day who had lectured on the Gifford foundation, the most prestigious philosophical foundation in the British Empire. Lloyd George gave it as his opinion that no more brilliant mind had ever sat in the British Cabinet Room than Arthur James Balfour: informed, incisive, able to see all sides of every issue. And when he was called upon to speak for Britain at one point in the Versailles Peace Conference, he started out in his true philosophical style, with total and almost clinical detachment, arguing the pros and cons and saying, "Now all of these things are on this side of the argument, and all of these things are on the other side of the argument," and then he sat down. The leader of the French delegation was Georges Clemenceau and Clemenceau never had any doubts about where righteousness lay when the interests of France were at stake. And Lloyd-George says that as soon as Balfour sat down, Clemenceau got up, turned and looked at him and said, "Well, which side are you on?" That was a question which haunted the minds of men and women in the Graeco-Roman world as far as their understanding of God was concerned. In those days, people had no doubts about the existence of God—atheism is a relatively modern phenomenon. But what they were very, very uncertain about was whose side He was on. They could not count on His being on their side. Sometimes He might seem to be on their side, sometimes He might seem to be on the opposite side. Paul, as the representative of



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this newborn Christian faith, places this as his central and unqualified affirmation that God is *for* us . . . God is for us.

There are many ways in which I think the overall message of the Bible can be summed up. But I do not know if there is any that is better than this formula which Paul spells out for us here. If there is one message which reverberates through Scripture from start to finish, from Genesis to Revelation, it is this—that God is on our side. He creates Adam, and when Adam falls, He comes to the rescue. When mankind backslides into sinfulness, He saves Noah so that salvation and the saved race may be secured. He calls out Abraham. From Abraham comes Israel. When Israel fails, He does not give up but starts again, when the Exile is over. And when Israel fails yet once more, He establishes a new Israel, even though that Israel is reduced to one single individual, the person of His Son. If there is one message, I say, which comes through clearly from the pages of Holy Scripture, it is this—God is on our side, God is for us. But if it is possible to draw that conclusion from Scripture as a whole, there is one particular instance, one conclusive and indubitable evidence that God is on our side which Paul goes on to quote here, in order to back up his argument, and it is this: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.”

There is a moving episode which illuminates this in Helen Waddell’s historical novel about the great mediaeval theologian, Peter Abelard. Hounded by his enemies from his professor’s chair, he now lives in seclusion in a small monastery with a few simple priests. As Abelard is eating one evening with one of the priests, Thiebault, the silence is broken by the cry of a rabbit caught in one of their snares, and they rush out to release it. As the creature lies suffering in Thiebault’s hands, he says to Abelard: “I think God is in it.” When Abelard presses him as to his meaning he points to a tree that has been sawn through. “We see the rings,” he explains, “only at the point where the tree is sawn, but in fact they run the whole length of the tree. Calvary is the bit of God that we saw, but in truth He is like that all the way through.”

Paul is using the same idea. Is it imaginable that having given us His greatest gift, God will now desert us in our hour of need? So he asks: “If God be for us, who shall be against us?” If God is against us, it really does not make very much difference who is for us. And if God is for us, it does not make any difference who is against us.

II. WHO SHALL ACCUSE US? (v. 33)

Paul moves to his second question, in the 33rd verse: from the question “Who shall be against us?” to the question, “Who shall accuse us; who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?” The imagery is that of the law court. It is possible that Paul may have had Satan in mind—Satan as depicted, for example, in the first two chapters of the Book of Job. And his purpose, then as now, is to subvert the Christian’s confidence that he has really been accepted by God, and to do so on the basis of what

he has done in the past. It may be that not all of us have struggled at this point. It may be that there are those of here who are not haunted by things done badly and things done wrongly in the past. But there are some who have lived at this point. Paul was one of them, and there have been multiplied others. Is the past really finished with? Are my failures and sins really gone, to be remembered against me no more forever? Perhaps Fitzgerald was right.

*The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.*

Luther was tormented by such thoughts and according to tradition flung his inkpot at the devil on one occasion, so keen was the temptation.

Frank Crossley, one of the great holiness leaders in Britain at the turn of the century, never seemed to be able finally to shake from his memory the haunting recollections of long years that had been mis-spent and opportunities that had been wasted and on his dying bed, he had his children come and sing to him

*“Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.”*

Paul, I suspect, knew something of the same experience. “I am the least of all the apostles,” he wrote to the Corinthians, “who am not fit to be called an apostle, for I persecuted the church of God; howbeit I obtained mercy.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

Now against that kind of accusation, against that possibility of accusation, I ask you to notice the armory, the artillery, if you like, which Paul draws up. There are two ranks of it. First of all, Paul points to the divine initiative in salvation—“Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” And if it is God who justifies, then who will seek to drive Him out and His verdict out of court? That is the recurrent insistence of the New Testament and not least of the teaching of Paul. “In Christ, God was reconciling the world unto himself.” “God hath sent forth Jesus Christ as a propitiation through faith in His blood.” “Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.” And the second rank of Paul’s artillery, in reply to this, beyond the divine initiative in salvation, are these three aspects of the saving work of Christ. “Who is to condemn” he says. And here is one place where we might very well supply another question mark. We are perhaps accustomed to the translation “It is Christ Jesus who died.” But Paul, very probably makes a rhetorical question out of this and says, “Is it Christ Jesus, who died for us, who was raised for our justification, who intercedes for us at the right hand of God?” Is it this Jesus who is to accuse us? The ground of our eternal acceptance with God lies in Jesus Christ, crucified for

our trespasses, raised for our justification, exalted at God's right hand where He intercedes constantly on our behalf.

*Approach, my soul, the mercy seat,
Where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly fall before His feet,
For none can perish there.*

*Be Thou my shield and hiding-place,
That sheltered by Thy side,
I may my fierce accuser face,
And tell him Thou hast died.*

III. WHO SHALL SEPARATE US? (v. 35)

This brings Paul to his third and last question, from "Who shall be against us?" and "Who shall accuse us?" to the question in the 35th verse, which controls the thought from there to the end of the chapter: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The answer that Paul gives to the question does not come until the 37th verse. And I ask you especially to notice the wording in which Paul's answer comes. "What is it," he asks, "that makes us conquerors?" It is not because He loves us, although that also is true. "It is," says St. Paul, "because He *loved* us," pointing back to that once-for-all, indubitable, invincible demonstration of His eternal love to us on Calvary's Cross—that is our final anchorage and that is our final grounding. The phrase is not casual, for Paul uses it elsewhere, as in Gal. 2:20: "I live through faith in the Son of God who *loved* me and gave himself for me." It is something fundamental and far-reaching that Paul is saying in this careful phrase; he is saying that the ground of his final assurance is not his experience of God but that which is prior to it: God's saving work in Christ.

Two things go into the making of our relationship with God: our commitment to Him and His commitment to us. Both are necessary, but they are not equal. My commitment to Him is not the equal of His commitment to me. And my hold on Him is not the equal of His grasp and of His hold upon me. Paul goes beyond experience. When he comes to ground the final triumph of the love of God, he goes beyond experience, to those objective historical facts which stand out in human history undeniably. There is the demonstration, he says, that God loves you and it is impossible for anything to validate His love to you more certainly or more clearly than it is validated in those historical events.

My understanding is too slender a base on which to ground my confidence in the final triumph of the love of God. "It is not," says James Denney in the sublime words of the last sentence of *Jesus and the Gospel*, "the acceptance of any theology or Christology however penetrating or profound, which keeps us Christian; we remain loyal to our Lord and Savior only because He has apprehended us and His hand is strong." Nor is it my experience of love towards God which secures and holds me and gives me ultimate confidence in the final and eternal triumph of His love. For my love for Him is subject to fluctuations of feeling, is obscured by my emotions, and I have no calculus that is fine enough to

measure whether my love is all that it ought to be. But one thing that I cannot doubt for a moment is the reality and validity of His love towards me, manifested once and for all and sublimely on the Cross of Calvary. And it is through Him who loved us, and whose love shines out eternally from that Cross, that we are more than conquerors.

*Firm as His Throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I've committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour.*

So, says St. Paul, nothing shall separate us . . . nothing. Tribulation will not do it, persecution will not do it, death will not do it—death, that most ultimate and final of all separations—death cannot separate us from the love of God.

That is a brave statement. You have heard, have you not, of the day when a small boy came to Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great essayist, and asked him for his autograph. Emerson was greatly advanced in years, and when the boy came to him and said, "Would you write your name for me?" Emerson looked at him blankly and said, "Name? Tell me the name that you wish me to write, and I will write it for you." The boy in bewilderment took pen and paper and wrote down the words "Ralph Waldo Emerson" and the old man took the pen out of the boy's hand and wrote carefully from the words that had been written down, referring to each letter in turn to make sure that he got it right. What shall we say of one in such a state, whom death in its advance installments has separated from his surroundings, separated from himself? What shall we say when the last stroke falls, and death is final and complete? Will the love of God surround us then? Paul confidently affirms that it will: "Nothing in all creation shall separate us from the love of God."

*When the will has forgotten the lifelong aim,
And the mind can only disgrace its fame,
And a man is uncertain of his own name
The power of the Lord shall fill this frame.*

*When the last sigh is heaved, and the last
tear shed,
And the coffin is waiting beside the bed,
And the widow and child forsake the dead—
The angel of the Lord shall lift this head.*

"Now when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory."

CONCLUSION

"Who shall be against us? . . . Who shall accuse us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of God? . . . I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This sermon was delivered in a chapel service at Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri.

**All scripture quotations are the author's own translation.

SERMON OUTLINES



A BOY'S RESPONSE TO GOD

Background Scripture: 1 Samuel 3

- I. His Response to God was one of **Quick obedience.** v.4
- II. His Response to God was one of **Trust.** v. 10
- III. His Response to God was one of **Openness.** vv. 15-18.

—Derl Keefer
Waukegan, Illinois

HOSTAGES SET FREE

Background Scripture: Gal. 5:1

I. God the Father Sets His Creation Free.

- A. He Sets the Universe Free (Gen. 1:1).
 1. He Sets the World Free (Gen. 1:2-19).
 2. He Sets the Creaturehood Free (Gen. 1:26-31).
 3. He Sets Humanity Free (Gen. 1:26-31).
- B. He Sets the Jews Free.
 1. The Jews Become His Special People (Gen. 15:4-5).
 2. The Jews Become Slaves (Exod. 1:11).
 3. The Jews Promised Freedom (Exod. 6:1).
 4. The Jews Set Free (Exod. 12:31).

II. The Son Sets People Free.

- A. He Sets People Free from Disease (Mark 1:32).
- B. He Sets People Free from Demons (Mark 1:32).
- C. He Sets People Free from Darkness of Sin.

III. The Spirit Sets Us Free.

- A. He Will Set the Springs of Living Life Inside of Us FREE!
- B. He Will Come and Fill our lives. Look at Pentecost.
- C. He Will Come and Free Us from Carnal Sin.

—Derl Keefer

RETALIATION! RESENTMENT! REVENGE!

Text: Matthew 5:38-48

Introduction: You can handle these words of Jesus in one of three ways: (1) explain away the meaning, (2) apply to another person, (3) let the Word challenge, change, and correct you.

- I. What did O.T. Law teach? (Exodus 23; Leviticus 24; Deuteronomy 19)

- A. Law did not permit the individual to gain revenge.
- B. Law dealt justice as administered through a judge.
- C. Law was beginning of mercy because it placed a limit to tribal vengeance.

II. What did Jesus do with O.T. Law? (Matt. 5:38-48)

- A. Jesus asks about your attitudes—not just actions.
 1. (v. 39) calculated insults against you—what is your attitude?
 2. (v. 40) your rights infringed upon—what is your attitude?
 3. (v. 41) unreasonably task hatefully imposed—what is your attitude?
- B. Jesus asks for more than an end to bad attitudes—we are to love our enemies.

III. This is not possible to achieve. (v. 48)

- A. Verse 48 tells us to be perfect. We are unable.
- B. Original language means something is perfect when its purpose is fully realized. We are unable.
- C. Jesus prays for us in John 17. The Holy Spirit gives the person a heart of perfect love. This is God's purpose for us.

Conclusion: O.T. taught mercy. Jesus applied this to our attitudes. And then He called us to be perfect. He calls us to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit. This is Jesus' challenge and prayer.

—Paul Carruthers
Eagle River, Alaska

WHY PREACH

Text: 1 Corinthians 1.

Introduction:

- A. There are many changing attitudes to preaching.
- B. A great need is to revive the art and practice of preaching.
- C. It is still the primary task of the Church and the pastor. It is the God-ordained way to make the gospel known (1 Cor. 1:21).
- D. Within chapter 1 of First Corinthians, Paul stresses preaching.
 1. The superiority of preaching, v. 17: "Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel."
 2. The reaction to preaching, v. 18: ". . . to them that perish, foolishness . . . unto us which are saved . . . the power of God."

3. The purpose of preaching, v. 21: ". . . to save them that believe."

4. The message of preaching, v. 23: "We preach Christ crucified."

- E. Consider why the Church needs to develop a preaching ministry. Why preach?

1. The Compulsion of the Preacher

It is a calling which brings with it a divine compulsion. I MUST preach.

- a. A calling which dispenses a charge (2 Cor. 4:1; 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:8).

- b. A calling which fires a zeal (1 Cor. 9:16; Jer. 20:9).

- c. A calling which follows an example (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 4:20; Acts 8:4-5).

2. The Continuance of the Believer

The purpose of preaching is not solely "to save them that believe"; it is also that "the man of God may be perfect." It aids growth.

- a. The command of the Savior (Matt. 28:19).

- b. The advice of the apostle (2 Tim. 3:14 ff.).

- c. The need of the believer (1 Pet. 2:2).

3. The Commission of the Church

Any church which sacrifices a preaching ministry for something else, e.g. social gospel, is failing in its function.

- a. A divine commission (Mark 16:15).

- b. A sovereign purpose (1 Cor. 1:21).

- c. An urgent need (1 Pet. 2:2) . . . that ye may grow.

4. The Challenge of the World

The great need of men is to know the redeeming love of Christ, and the preaching of the gospel makes Christ known.

- a. The need confronting us (Rom. 10:1-17).

- b. The message committed to us (2 Cor. 4:4-5; 5:18-19).

- c. The power available to us (Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16).

—David Leeder
London, England

by C. S. Cowles

Professor of Preaching,
Northwest Nazarene College,
Nampa, Idaho



PREACHING IDEAS ON EPHESIANS 1:1-10

CAPTIVATED BY CHRIST

Fifteen times in 10 verses Paul lifts up the name of Christ either directly or by personal pronoun. These verses constitute some of the loftiest and grandest revelation of Jesus in the entire New Testament. Quite clearly, the apostle is completely *captivated by Christ*. That embodies a sermon theme which could be developed in this way:

First, Jesus Is the Cosmic Christ (1-4) who

- 1) calls us into His fellowship (v. 1),
- 2) confirms us in His grace (vv. 2-3), and who,
- 3) chooses us to be holy in Him (v. 4).

Second, Jesus Is the Compassionate Christ (5-7) who

- 1) effects our adoption as sons of God (v. 5),
- 2) freely bestows upon us saving grace (v. 6), and who
- 3) redeems us from sin (v. 7).

Third, Jesus Is the Consummate Christ (8-10), who

- 1) lavishes God's grace upon us (v. 8),
- 2) reveals His will to us (v. 9), and who
- 3) brings all things to their final consummation in Christ (v. 10).

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the French Roman Catholic theologian-philosopher had an intriguing idea which captures the Christological essence of these verses. He affirmed that Jesus is the *alpha point* of all creation (v. 4). He is the creator-God who brings all things into existence and who thrusts everything forward through time. Yet Jesus is also the *omega point* (v. 10). He stands at the end of history, beyond time, drawing all things to their final consummation in himself like a great cosmic magnet. And between these two points, Jesus is the secret center, sustaining force, and redemptive power of the world. Beginning and ending, and at every point in between, *Jesus is Lord!* That is Chardin's view. That is Paul's conviction. And that is my sure confession of faith!

"*The Quest for Identity*" is a relevant topic that can be amply developed out of verse one by answering these three fundamental questions:

First, Who Am I? Paul's answer is: "I am an apostle of Christ Jesus."* We are well on our way toward discovering *who* we are when we have come to know *whose* we are.

Second, Why Am I Here? Paul's answer is: "I am here by God's express will" (cf. vv. 4-5). Paul did not feel that he was a microscopic speck of human protoplasm accidentally floating on the cosmic sea of the universe. He was convinced, rather, that the creator-God had His eye on him in a very personal

way, and that he had been called to a most unique and special role in God's salvation history.

Third, What Am I to Do? Paul's answer is: "I am called to be an apostle [one sent out] to the saints and all who are faithful in Christ Jesus." At the very moment of his conversion, Paul received his divine commission for ministry (Acts 26:16-18). To hear God's call for a Christ-exalting servanthood ministry is the final step toward solving the identity crisis. Only then can we forget about ourselves and find our true selves through investing in the lives of others. "For it is in giving that we receive, it is in loving that we are loved, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life" (St. Francis of Assisi's prayer).

"**Cultivating a Christian Concept of God**" is a vitally important teaching sermon that can be fruitfully developed from these verses. Paul sings as he soars in exulting, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (v. 3, NASB). Unfortunately, many in our congregations cannot say that. After all, how can they bless a God whom they perceive to have cursed their lives with all sorts of disasters, losses, and cruel blows of fate?

It would be well to begin our sermon by focusing upon the plight of people struggling with a perverse understanding of God.

First, the Blight of a Grotesque God. It was Martin Luther who confessed his pre-awakening concept of God in these words: "Through the law I became aware of how it is betwixt God and me. Therefore, I moved about anxious with fears and questionings, unnerved by the slightest trembling leaf, terrified by the thunder's noise. Every moment I expected God to come behind me and crush my head with a meat-ax."

John Calvin's God who arbitrarily elects a few souls to heaven while irrevocably predestining the rest to hell—regardless of their own decision—represents one of the most grotesque portraits of God to emerge in 2,000 years of Church history. Remnants of Calvin's vindictive and unforgiving God who brings to pass all that occurs—whether good or bad—remains deeply lodged in the minds of many sincere and sensitive Christians today. Jonathan Edwards, Puritan divine and true son of Calvin, gave a particularly frightening and repugnant expression to this repulsive concept of God in his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

The "bottom line" of this perverse concept of God is that *He is no longer our deliverer, but the One from whom we need to be delivered!* Thankfully, Paul's vision of the God who has revealed himself in Christ is quite different.

Second, the Beauty of a Gracious God.

1) God Is Gracious in Who He Is (v. 2). His first word to us is not law, but grace. It is not "Do," but "Done."

2) God Is Gracious in His Revelation of Himself in Christ. The Hebrews defined God as the "Father of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Christians define God as the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." What is God like? He is like Jesus (cf. Col. 1:15, 19; 2:9; Heb. 1:1-3).

3) God Is Gracious in What He Has Planned for Us (vv. 4, 8-10).

4) God Is Gracious in What He Has Done for Us (vv. 5-7).

Karl Barth's definition of grace says it well: "Grace is the incomprehensible fact that God is well-pleased with a man (through Christ), and that a man may rejoice in Him."

Here is another way to develop the concept of a "Gracious God."

I. Before I became a sinner, God called me to be a saint (v. 1). There is something more original than original sin: and that is original righteousness! We were created in God's image. He breathed into us the breath of life. Sin is an aberration: sainthood is our true nature.

II. Before I felt the lash of God's law, He called me into the liberty of His grace (vv. 2-3). God's first word is always a word of grace. Permission precedes prohibition. "Take, eat" comes before "Thou shalt not eat" (Gen. 2:16-17; cf. Exod. 20:1 ff., where the word of grace precedes the Ten Commandments; also John 3:16-17; Rom. 5:6, 8, 10; Eph. 2:8-9).

III. Before I became a sinner, God chose me to be a son (vv. 4-5). Christ's great work of redemption (v. 7) has as its purpose the restoration of men to their original position of sonship.

IV. Before I sought for salvation, Christ redeemed me (vv. 6-7). Everything of importance in salvation begins from God's side (cf. 1 John 4:10).

V. Before I lost my way, God included me in His Cosmic Plan (vv. 8-10). It was God's gracious intention, from the very beginning, to include us as active participants in the great destiny of bringing all things to their consummation in Christ. No wonder Paul can "raise the glory of His grace . . . which He lavished upon us . . . according to His kind intention" (vv. 6-9, NASB).

A fine textual sermon can be developed out of verse four in this manner:

I. God has chosen us . . .

II. God has chosen us to be . . .

III. God has chosen us to be holy . . .

IV. God has chosen us to be holy in Christ.

As Charlie Brown exclaimed upon finally being selected by one of the lunch-hour baseball teams: "Happiness is being chosen to play on the team." 🏈



"DO YOU EVER GET A BIT CURIOUS AS TO WHAT GOES ON HERE BETWEEN EASTERS?"



"YOU SHOULD COME AROUND MORE OFTEN, DIBBLE. YOU LOOK LIKE YOU COULD USE THE SLEEP!"



TODAY'S BOOKS for TODAY'S PREACHER

Unfinished Easter

By David H. C. Read (Harper & Row. 132 pp., paperback, \$4.95).

Unfinished Easter carefully combines inspiration with a lasting practical value. Long after the initial inspiration has subsided, the practical benefit continues, enabling the book to be valuable as a continued reference.

Read's work is more than just an elaboration on the obvious. He raises questions we ask, and then gives the answers drawn from scriptural principles.

Much of his material will be helpful in building sermons. An example of this is found in chapter 2, "What I Mean by Religion," based on Prov. 3:6.

But primarily, his practical material will be helpful in *building the preacher*. This author seems to face what we face, and gives answers that both of us need. An illustration of his practicality is seen in the chapter entitled "Thoughts when I Conduct a Funeral." As I read this chapter, I realized his thoughts were mine as well.

I found this book refreshing. Every preacher, particularly every pastor, will be greatly enriched by this book.

—Bill Draper

Voices of the Passion

By O. P. Kretzmann and A. C. Oldsen (Augsburg. 128pp., paperback, \$3.50).

Many books have appeared portraying the various types, attitudes, and characteristics of individuals who were associated with Christ in His hour of death. However, this one is different. The authors let the characters speak for themselves, regarding their response or lack of response to Jesus Christ.

Peter comes alive. Judas is seen in a new light. Pontius Pilate shouts a clear-cut message to the 20th-century "fence sitter."

Pastors will appreciate the flow of language used in these messages; the word pictures are lucid; the character sketches believable, human,

and moving. The authors' gifted imaginations will stimulate many preachers to treat other biblical characters in a similar way in order to enhance their pulpit ministry.

The authors give the busy preacher a tremendous resource of background material about the characters. I, for one, am unable to find time to dig out facts which surround the careers of these individuals, the presentation of which "fleshes" them out for the listening congregation.

—Wesley G. Campbell

The Multiple Staff and the Larger Church

by Lyle E. Shaller (Abingdon, Nashville. Paperback, 142 pp., \$4.95).

What are the major differences between small, medium, and large churches? Are they differences of degree or kind? What are the advantages and liabilities of large churches? What are the basic missions of larger churches and how do we staff to accomplish those missions? What staff relationship models are workable and at what costs? How do the various staff roles differ and what understandings and support systems are required? These questions and others are either implicit or explicit in this fast-paced, hard-hitting book.

Shaller treats concerns and subjects that are endemic to ministry in larger churches. His approach is primarily organizational, descriptive, and diagnostic. He offers little in the direction of proscription or prescription. He cites much statistical data without confusing tables—but without adequate source citations in several instances. Brief notes, annotations, and resources for further study or more information are provided at the end of the book for each chapter's topics.

One of the writer's tendencies is to recapitulate lists provided in earlier discussions (repeating some things as many as three or more times). The reader may view this as boring, irritating, or as cross-referencing important concerns that apply aptly to other situations.

Another tendency is to present theses or hypotheses without equivo-

cation or tentativity. One might wonder at such a gift of confident diagnosis.

Pastors, associates, and church board members would find good checklists, new concepts, and typical problems identified and clarified by Shaller. Though this book is certainly not intended as a manual or guide, it does complement Marvin Judy's *The Multiple Staff Ministry* (Abingdon, 1966) as excellent grist for the mind.

—Chester O. Galloway

Planning Your Preaching

By J. Winston Pearce (Nashville: Broadman Press. 197 pp., paperback, \$3.95).

Every evangelical preacher needs to understand the importance of planned preaching. He has neither the "Christian year" nor ecclesiastical authorities to tell him what to preach each Sunday he stands in the pulpit. Many times he becomes the victim of his own transgressions with the congregation inevitably suffering. Every pastor needs evaluatory instruments to help him to see *what* he has preached and the *direction* he is going in his preaching.

J. Winston Pearce recognizes both the malaise and the cure for disorganized preaching. He begins with the importance of a plan and the reason for planning. The book should be very helpful to the pastor who is struggling with his preaching program and to others who are looking for viable ways to meet the various demands of a growing congregation.

He not only suggests a possible work sheet in preaching, but reveals how to follow the Christian year, preaching from the Bible, preaching in series, denominational emphases, and planned Scripture readings. His selected notes and bibliography are excellent.

Dr. Pearce's chapter on the reasons for planning is particularly useful and theologically oriented. (1) A planned preaching program gives the Holy Spirit a better chance to do His work with and in the preacher. (2) A planned preaching program is based on the need of the minister to preach in the direction of the whole gospel. (3) A planned preaching pro-

gram lends to a teaching ministry. In a day when so many congregations are uninformed about the nature of redemption and the thrust of the Scriptures, a planned preaching program becomes an imperative.

The republishing of this excellent practical work is well in order. I commend it to every pastor.

—Oscar F. Reed

Divine Healing of the Body

By J. Sidlow Baxter (Zondervan. 290 pp., hardback, \$7.95).

Divine Healing of the Body, by J. Sidlow Baxter, is a refreshing, scholarly, in-depth study of a much misunderstood subject. The modern "faith healing" campaigns and prominent "faith healers" have created great interest in the subject of divine healing but have also generated much misunderstanding.

J. Sidlow Baxter is a well-known evangelical preacher, lecturer, and writer. This book is a sane, sensible approach to a difficult and emotionally charged subject. He has done an excellent piece of work in this book and in my opinion rendered a tremendous service to the church.

The book is divided into three sections in which he considers the historical, scriptural, and experiential aspects of divine healing. He avoids the sensationalism often surrounding this subject, yet states clearly that he strongly believes in divine healing in

the present age. He not only defends his position from Scripture, but also from his own personal testimony. He gives an excellent study of Jas. 5:13-16, which he believes to be our strongest basis of proclaiming divine healing for the body in the present age.

Many will disagree with his dispensational interpretation of the Book of Acts, and one would wish he did not lean so heavily on the ministry of the late Kathryn Kuhlman for the section on "Divine Healing in Present Experience."

This is one of the most wholesome, well-balanced, and helpful books I have read on divine healing. I believe every preacher would profit from reading it.

—Terrell C.

(Jack) Sanders, Jr.

Telling the Story

By Richard A. Jensen (Augsburg. 189 pp., paperback, \$5.95).

Would you like to analyze your preaching techniques? This book deals with the variety and imagination of preaching.

Dr. Jensen describes three basic types of preaching. After each type, he gives sermon examples of the type he has described.

He lists the characteristics of didactic preaching, or preaching as teaching. Dr. Jensen then concludes the chapter with the weaknesses of

didactic preaching. Probably more preachers use this form of preaching than any other, and yet it has some definite weaknesses.

Proclamatory preaching, or preaching as an event, deals with the reality and effect of the gospel, rather than its ideas and content. Proclamatory preaching of the gospel gets closer to the heart of who Jesus is.

Story preaching, or narration preaching, has been described as "preaching as fairy tale." Dr. Jensen builds a strong case for "parable or illustration" preaching. He points out that it happens only in the doing. His conclusion for this section states, "We have a great story to tell. It's the greatest story ever told."

Dr. Jensen believes there is a need for all three types, and that every good pastor should strengthen his preaching ministry in these areas. His sermon examples are well worth the price of the book.

Any pastor who would like to be challenged with a fresh approach in his preaching ministry should read this book.

—Leon F. Wyss

**ALL BOOKS REVIEWED
AVAILABLE FROM
YOUR PUBLISHING HOUSE.**

How to Avoid Staff Infection

(Continued from page 44)

"being used" by insisting that the critical person talk to the appropriate person in charge. It is amazing how criticism fades when the people involved talk face-to-face.

In our church a workable staff meeting rule is to use personal names. Every staff member knows better than to mention a criticism with the ambiguous,

"They say . . ." Any matter too confidential to use personal names should never enter the discussion at all. Whenever anyone slips a "they say . . ." into the conversation, the others immediately ask, "Who are 'they'?" As word of the rule spreads, unjust criticism diminishes. The open and honest practice makes it possible to deal with problems.

A pastor can talk to real people, but communication with an unnamed "they" remains illusive if not impossible.

In ripple-like circles of influence, the relationships of the staff members will affect everything a church does. So what happens in staff relationships will sooner or later reach the outermost rim of congregational life. What about your church staff members—are they compatible or combatible?

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THREE WHO BELIEVED (Continued from page 37)

We are, however, promised something which He told His disciples would be far better and more permanent. We are promised the constant presence of our Christlike God. He comes to us through the Holy Spirit to be resident among His people and to be involved in their lives.

The way to have this experience now is in essence just what it was then. You must look for Him with the best logic of your mind, the acknowledged hunger of your heart, and the glad surrender of your will.

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OLD TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES



by Charles Isbell

KNOWING AND NOT KNOWING

We have established by our analysis of the root 'bd the major issue at stake for the people of Israel in the story of the Exodus (see previous article). If our thesis is correct, we should be able to augment and supplement it by reference to other key roots within the narrative. In this article, the target of our analysis is the Hebrew root *yd'*, commonly translated into English by some form of "to know." This root also functions within the story at several points and signifies the most basic ideas intended by the drama as a whole.

In 1:8, the opening declaration which sets the Exodus story into motion involves *yd'*. A new king arose over Egypt, we are told, who had not "*known*" Joseph. And then with breathtaking speed, we are told what happens as a result of this gap in the Pharaoh's knowledge. Not knowing Joseph meant not knowing the agreements worked out between the Egyptian government and the people soon to be known as "Israelites" (see Gen. 47:11-12). Not knowing Joseph meant not having had opportunity to work closely with a representative of the Israelites and to learn that he (and they) were good citizens, not to be feared but to be respected and prized by any government. In short, not knowing Joseph meant that the Pharaoh was ignorant of the kind of information he needed in order to understand properly and relate well to the Israelites.

As the story line develops, we are introduced to other things that are "*known*" or "*unknown*." The fate of the child Moses set afloat on the Nile is unknown (2:4) and gives us a sensation of suspense as we read. The act of the adult Moses in defending his people from oppression comes to be known by the Pharaoh (2:14) and is the reason Moses has to flee from Egypt to protect his own life.

And then we come to 2:24. The people have cried out (2:23). What will happen to them? In two verses, with four sentences, the narrator gives his first and partial answer.

That answer is found in 2:24-25, it is only partial at this point, and it is written in a sensational format. Notice that in the four sentences, certain things are common. Each one has "God" as its subject. Each one has an active verb. Each of the first three has an expressed direct object. The fourth apparently lacks such an object. For clarity, let us use tabular form to analyze the four sentences together.

Subject	Active Verb	Direct Object
God	heard	their groaning
God	remembered	his covenant
God	saw	the people of Israel
God	knew	?

Now the question mark in the table indicates the reaction which any native speaker of Hebrew would have upon hearing the story told in this way. Unfortunately, most English versions have supplied a direct object, generally something like "their condition," and have totally obscured the impact intended by the structure. Check the JB here, with its note that something is missing. What is that something? Or, as any child would exclaim upon hearing the story told aloud, "*What* did God know?" That is the question, but in order to answer the child's question at this point in the story, it would be necessary to tell the entire narrative until you reached 14:31, the Sea was crossed safely, and the people were truly away from the Pharaoh. Notice too that this cryptic reference to God knowing something (we don't yet understand what) is the perfect balance to the beginning of section "A" with its opening sentence telling us that the Pharaoh did *not* know something important.

Now in the next section, an object to God's knowledge is supplied. "I know their pain" (3:7). But is that all God knows? We have yet to learn. And then in 5:2, the Pharaoh shocks us all by asserting boldly, "I do not *know* Yahweh." That is why the Pharaoh refuses to give up his slaves. He has not even heard of this new god on the block! And so *yd'* introduces us to another major issue in the Exodus narrative. Trouble that started by the Pharaoh's ignorance can be remedied only by the medicine of knowledge. And *yd'* serves well to indicate the dosage to be ingested.

Notice that now, the stage having been set for a confrontation between the unknowing Pharaoh and the knowing Yahweh, the task of Yahweh is to make knowledgeable those who ignorantly oppose Him. The major function of *yd'* beginning in 6:7 and continuing to 14:18 is in the phrase, "(You) will know that I am Yahweh." And who must come to know Yahweh? Pharaoh, the one who professed never to have heard of Yahweh; all Egypt; the Israelites themselves, who were prone to doubt Yahweh as much as anyone else. By the time Yahweh is done in Egypt, there will be no doubt that He is Lord of the earth, Controller of the forces of nature, Master of the Pharaoh, and God of the people of Israel.

For references in sections which use *yd'*, consult the following verses: 7:17; 8:6, 18; 9:14, 30; 10:2, 7, 26; 11:7; 14:4, 18. Notice the different people who are intended to come to a knowledge of Yahweh as He acts in the affairs of Egypt to free His people.



NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES

by Ralph Earle

John 1:18—2:8

The Only Begotten Son (1:18)

The oldest Greek manuscripts (third and fourth centuries) all have *monogenes theos*—"only begotten God." This, then, becomes the strongest possible statement of the full deity of Jesus. He is "the only begotten God" (NASB). The deity of Jesus is the recurring theme of John's Gospel, and to induce belief in this foundation doctrine of the Christian faith was the purpose for which it was written (20:31).

Declared (1:18)

The Greek verb is *exegeomai*, from which we get "exegete"—the Son has exegeted the Father. Literally the verb means "lead out." In a sense Christ has led the Father out for all of us to see.

But the verb came to mean: "explain, interpret, tell, report, describe" (Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, p. 275). Marvin Vincent writes: "John's meaning is that the Word *revealed* or *manifested* and *interpreted* the Father to men" (*Word Studies in the New Testament*, 2:61). Hermann Buechsel says that the correct meaning of the verb here is "to reveal" (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2:908).

In the Greek the verb is preceded by the pronoun *ekeinos*, "that one." J. H. Bernard says that here it is very emphatic: "It is *He* who interpreted (the Father)" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 1:33).

Bethabara or Bethany? (1:28)

The KJV has the former, recent versions the latter. Why? The simple reason is that all the oldest Greek manuscripts (third, fourth, and fifth centuries) have *Bethania*. How did it come to be changed to *Bethabara*?

Fortunately, in this case we know the answer. Origen (third century) tells us that he could not find any Bethany near the Jordan River, although he admits that *Bethania* is the reading of "nearly all the manuscripts." So he deliberately changed *Bethania* to *Bethabara*, and the latter became the dominant reading in the late manuscripts. There is no question but that "Bethany" is correct.

A Stone or Peter? (1:42)

Which is it? The simple answer is "Both." Cephas

is the Aramaic word for "a rock." John translates this for his readers as *petros*, the Greek word for "rock" or "stone." But since the Greek *petros* is rendered as "Peter" everywhere else in the KJV New Testament (161 times), probably it is better here also (NASB, NIV).

Wanted (2:3)

Today "want" means "wish for." But the verb here, *hystereo*, means "fail, give out, lack" (A. & G., p. 849). So the correct sense is: "When the wine gave out" (NASB) or "When the wine was gone" (NIV).

What Have I to Do with Thee? (2:4)

The Greek literally says, "What to me and to thee?"—*Ti emoi kai soi*. Bernard says that this is "a phrase, translated from the Hebrew, occurring several times in the Greek Bible [Septuagint], and always suggestive of diversity of opinion or interest." He goes on to say: "The phrase does not always imply reproach, but it suggests it. Here it seems to be a gentle suggestion of misunderstanding: 'I shall see to that; it will be better that you should leave it to me'" (John 1:75).

Draw Out (2:8)

This is the literal meaning of *antleo*. It is generally assumed that the command was to draw some water out of the stone water jars. But B. F. Westcott notes that "the original word is applied most naturally to drawing water from the well (iv. 7, 15), and not from a vessel like the waterpot. Moreover the emphatic addition of *now* seems to mark the continuance of the same action of drawing as before, but with a different end. Hitherto they had drawn to fill the vessels of purification: they were charged *now* to 'draw and bear to the governor of the feast.' It seems most unlikely that water taken from vessels of purification could have been employed for the purpose of the miracle" (*The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 38).

We believe that the filling up of the water jars showed completion of Judaism, with its ceremonial cleansings. The unlimited supply of water from the well, turned into wine, symbolized the beginning of Christianity with its endless, joyful supply of God's grace.





CLERGY QUIZ

1. Which of the following organizations had its first convention last November?
 - A. Ex-Mormons for Jesus
 - B. Ex-Jehovah's Witnesses for Jesus
 - C. Ex-Communists for Christ
2. Which of the following is the newly elected president of the Sun Moon Unification Church?
 - A. Bill Gothard
 - B. Marvin Katzenbugel
 - C. Kim Yong Din
 - D. Mose Durst
3. Which of the following pledged \$500,000 to the National Organization of Women and the ERA?
 - A. Norman Lear's Tandem Production (Archie Bunker, etc.)
 - B. Rose Kennedy
 - C. Mary Tyler Moore Productions
 - D. The Ford Foundation
4. How many "refugees" are there in today's torn up world?
 - A. 1 million
 - B. 8 Million
 - C. 13 million
 - D. 130 million
5. What percent of American Protestants are members of the denomination they were raised in?
 - A. 40
 - B. 90
 - C. 65
 - D. 78
6. Which of the following religious groups have been under police scrutiny for stockpiling weapons?
 - A. Jehovah's Witnesses
 - B. Healthy Happy Holy Organization
 - C. Hare Krishna
 - D. World Wide Church of God
7. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" is from:
 - A. Matthew 12
 - B. Micah 7
 - C. Isaiah 1
 - D. 2 Samuel 3
8. The President of the Christian Holiness Association (CHA) is:
 - A. B. Edgar Johnson
 - B. Leo Thornton
 - C. Dennis Kinlaw
 - D. Dorcas Climenhager
9. Cross-cultural ministry is of grave importance because non-Caucasians make up what percent of the U.S. population?
 - A. 7%
 - B. 17%
 - C. 27%
 - D. 37%
 - E. 47%
 - F. 57%
10. "The Christian meets the world with the Bible in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other" is a well-known quotation from:
 - A. Karl Barth
 - B. Norman Vincent Peale
 - C. Adam Clarke
 - D. John Henry Jowett
11. Which of the Gospels record the "Paraclete Sayings of Jesus?"
 - A. Matthew
 - B. Mark
 - C. Luke
 - D. John
12. How many of the Gospels record the betrayal by Judas?
 - A. 4
 - B. 3
 - C. 2
 - D. 1
13. The promise that God will "*subdue our iniquities*" comes from:
 - A. Psalm 91
 - B. Joshua 1
 - C. Micah 7
 - D. John 3
14. Black churchman Simeon Nkoane, the third highest ranking Anglican in Johannesburg, recently got into trouble with the law because his apartment adjoining St. Mary's cathedral:
 - A. was found to be a hideout for revolutionaries.
 - B. was condemned as unsafe.
 - C. had become a source of illegal drug supplies.
 - D. is in an area reserved for whites only.
15. Which of the following was not written by Elton Trueblood?
 - A. *The Predicament of Modern Man*
 - B. *The Hollow Men*
 - C. *The Company of the Committed*
 - D. *The Incendiary Fellowship*
16. Which of the following were contemporaries?
 - A. Francis Bacon and Adam Clarke
 - B. Sir Isaac Newton and John Locke
 - C. William Shakespeare and John Wesley
 - D. Harry Emerson Fosdick and Hugo Grotius

ANSWERS:
 1-B; 2-D; 3-A; 4-C; 5-We don't know; we had the answer and lost it. If anybody knows, please share. 6-C; 7-C; 8-B; 9-E; 10-A; 11-D; 12-A; 13-C; 14-D; 15-B; 16-B;

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