

Lessons From The Garden

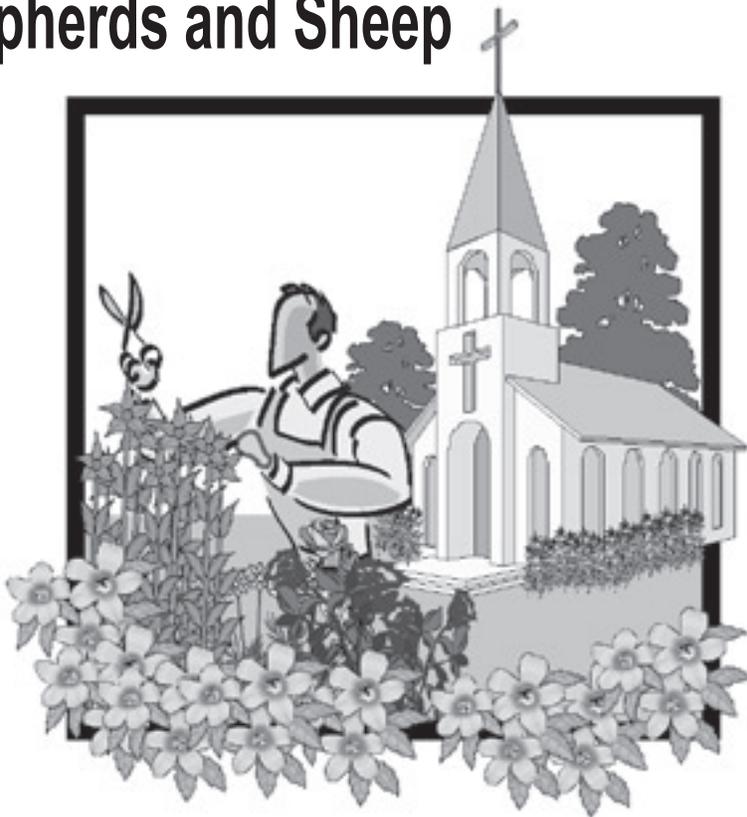
Or ... Of Shepherds and Sheep

By L.L. (Don) Veinot

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, [shall he] not much more [clothe] you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall

we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." (Matthew 6:26-34, KJV)

Jesus, the Master Teacher, often used things which were familiar to the audience to communicate spiritual truth. In His comments above, He was communicating to the disciples that they should not worry, since a) worrying will not solve anything and b) our lives and needs are in God's hands, and He will take care of His people, who are far more



valuable to Him than the rest of creation.

Many of us in discernment ministries constantly remind one another that God loves the Church, because it is only too easy to lose that focus when only looking at the problems we see within her. It is essential to remember that the reason we are called to expose false teachers, false prophets, and false teachings is *because* God loves the Church!

God's Garden

While thinking on these things, I was sitting on our porch swing in the early morning and looking out at

Joy's (my wife) gardens. Over the years, they have developed into something quite spectacular. Folks walking past stop to admire them, and Joy has developed a few relationships with some of those folks over the years. Both of our children were married in her garden; and so in addition to the beauty, there are very fond memories associated with this area of the yard which Joy has developed over the years.

Although beautiful, the gardens require a great deal of work and care. In the early spring, Joy spends time uncovering the rose bushes, pruning them, and fertilizing them to encourage growth. She checks and replaces portions of the fencing which she has put up to protect certain plants from some of the varmints which would do them harm when no

—Continued on page 2

The
Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.

Journal

is the quarterly publication of:
Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
P.O. Box 455, Lombard, IL 60148-0455
Phone: (630) 627-9028
Fax: (630) 627-6829
E-mail: info@midwestoutreach.org

Don VeinotPresident
Joy Veinot.....Director
D.L. McGehee.....Editor
S. Todd McGehee.....Layout/Art

ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Norman L. Geisler

President,
Southern Evangelical Seminary
Charlotte, NC

Janet Brunner

Layman,
Winston-Salem, NC

Kurt Goedelman

Director,
Person Freedom Outreach
St. Louis, MO

Dr. Jerry Buckner

Senior Pastor,
Tiburon Christian Fellowship
Tiburon, CA

Jhan Moscowitz

Midwest Regional Director,
Jews for Jesus
Skokie, IL

Ray Kollbocker

Senior Pastor,
Parkview Community Church
Glen Ellyn, IL

Dr. Ron Rhodes

President,
Reasoning From The Scriptures Min.
Frisco, TX

Bill Honsberger

Director,
Haven Ministries
Aurora, CO

Gino Geraci

Senior Pastor,
Calvary Chapel South Denver
Littleton, CO

Phil Ballmaier

Senior Pastor,
Calvary Chapel
Elk Grove, IL

*Your response to this publication
would be greatly appreciated!!!
Please send all correspondence and
subscription inquiries to the above address.
Thank you for reading the Journal.*

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
is a non-profit organization.

Financial donations are welcomed
and make this ministry possible.

"Garden" Continued from Page 1

one is looking. Weeding and light pruning must be done regularly throughout the season, along with providing pesticides against predators of the insect variety. And yes, they must be examined regularly for signs of disease, which can weaken or destroy the plants during the growing season.

Come fall, there is more work to do—mulching the plants and covering them to protect them for our sometimes very hard and cold Illinois winters. Yet for all of this work and care, there are just some things that Joy cannot accomplish for her flowers. She can fertilize them, but she cannot make them grow. She can water the garden with a hose, but she cannot produce thunderstorms with lightening, which releases essential nitrogen into the soil. A very large part of the process is just out of her hands.

What does this have to do with the Church? The Church is a spiritual entity that can be likened to a beautiful garden. The caretakers of God's garden can do many things to encourage growth and provide protection from weeds and inclement weather, but there are many other things that are simply out of their hands. As a body, we know that one sows, and one waters; but God alone causes the increase (1 Cor. 3:7).

Church Weeding

This analogy, as most analogies, does not correspond exactly to reality as we find it in the Church, but we feel it does give a good visual launching point. In the Church, as in the garden, there are things which the caretakers—the pastor and elders—can and should be doing to encourage growth and provide protection from various predators. In Acts 20:28-30, the Apostle Paul is meeting with the Ephesian elders and gives them a charge:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath

purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

To protect and heal, the gardener and the pastor first of all require *knowledge*. They have to know what a weed looks like and which diseases are most pernicious in their area. They need to know their rodents. ☺ They must have a familiarity with the plants in order to know what disease or pest is likely to attack each particular flower. Also, it is very helpful to be aware that some plants are very delicate while others are hardy and tough by nature. One cannot tend them all the same way: "one size" does not "fit all." One must also exercise due caution when pulling weeds, so as not to hurt the flowers nearby in one's zeal to get that weed out! ☺

Within the context of the Church, this means that some of the responsibilities of the pastor and elders are watching for and exposing false teachers and false teachings. One very popular "weed" making the rounds these days is a book—*The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown. It looks like an ordinary novel; there is nothing on the cover about its dangers to one's spiritual health. However, many Christians are reading it and finding themselves confused and in doubt—about the veracity of the Bible and the impeccability of Jesus Christ. We are grateful to our pastor, who took upon himself the task to read the book and preach a five-part series on the heresies and falsehoods the book contains. He did not discourage his congregation from reading the book, if they so chose, but he prepared them to answer the challenges to our faith contained therein, which is *far better!*

Now, considering the fact that Brown's book is only one weed among so many, perhaps we can appreciate the daunting task effective pastoring is.

Knowing the Plants

An astute gardener is not going to

try to turn daisies into roses or force the black-eyed Susans to look and/or act like lilacs. Guilt and manipulation will not cajole tomato plants to produce banana peppers. Astute pastors know this is true of people, too. Christians are not all banana peppers! And not all of us smell like roses. © The Church is made up of a wide variety of people with different strengths and weaknesses. In healthy churches, the leadership is not so much trying to plug people arbitrarily into areas of ministry according to need, but rather, they are trying to help them discover their areas of strength and fit them in accordingly. Many very important ministries are started by individuals who have a passion and desire for some area of ministry in particular. Sound church leadership comes alongside them to encourage them and build them up in areas of weakness. As they grow in their areas of service, they become leaders who, in turn, help others to implement their particular calling.

There is no substitute for one-on-one mentoring and discipleship which necessitates being involved in one another's lives over the long haul. It may be a slow process. In the end, this is how disciples are grown, who in turn will mentor others; and so the work of the Church gets accomplished.

Growing Pains

Who then is Paul, and who [is] Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. (1 Cor. 3:5-7)

Things haven't changed much between the first century and the twenty-first century. In First Corinthians chapter three, Paul is discussing the issue of factions who gathered around various leaders in the church. The penchant to idolize popular teachers was then, and continues to be, a big problem serving to distract people's focus from God. The

local pastor very often feels the pressure of being compared to a widely known radio and/or television preacher. This is patently unfair. The local pastor is close enough at hand for us to be able to note and count the blemishes on his face; but the national preacher's faults are hidden from our view, unless they happen to be *so* glaring that they catch the attention of *60 Minutes* or some other national media outlet.

Then there is the "perception of success" that the national star is able to project. Though our ideal of "success" is not grounded in *God's* view of reality, it is difficult for the local pastor (who may count his "successes" one by one) to compete with the *perceived* stellar achievements of the national hero, nor should he ever have to. Peter, Paul and Apollos were undoubtedly "stars" of the early Church; but in reality, they were humble servants of God whom He raised up for particular tasks. Paul, in an attempt to stave off this foolish and counterproductive veneration of one leader against another, pointed out that he planted and Apollos watered; but *God* is the one who caused the growth.

Local pastors are gifted differently than are nationally known pastors. The local pastors' work is vital, as they are the ones who are actually involved in the day-to-day lives of those for whom they care. The great disembodied voices coming across the air waves are not the ones who sit in the hospital waiting room comforting the woman who just lost her spouse or child. The media pastors may very well be able to present an especially heart-rending teaching from a distance, but they are not the ones who are performing the marriage ceremony for a young couple embarking on their new life together. Both ministers are being used by God, but even comparing the importance of one over the other is a little like asking which is more important: the face or the big toe? The face is what is seen in public, but the toes keep us from falling over! Without them, our faces would be in trouble.

—Continued on page 4

MCOI Branches

MAIN OFFICE:

Lombard, Illinois

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
P.O. Box 455
Lombard, IL 60148-0455
Phone: (630) 627-9028
E-mail: Info@midwestoutreach.org
President: L.L. (Don) Veinot, Jr.
Director: Joy A. Veinot

Spring Hill, Florida

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
3338 Landover Blvd.
Spring Hill, FL 34609-2619
Phone: (352) 684-4448
E-mail: dgholson@atlantic.net
Director: Diane Gholson

Pontotoc, Mississippi

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
170 Hester Ln.
Pontotoc, MS 38863
Phone: (662) 840-5873
E-mail: gadfly7@aol.com
Director: Jonathon Miles

Lohrville, Iowa

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
408 Main Street
Lohrville, IA 51453-1004
Phone: (712) 465-3010
E-mail: mco@cal-net.net
Director: Jeff Hauser

Scranton, Kansas

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
P.O. Box 201
Scranton, KS 66537
Phone: (785) 793-2143
E-mail: mcoscranton@usa.net
Director: Randall Birtell

Cape Coral, Florida

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
P.O. Box 150584
Cape Coral, FL
Phone: (239) 542-1914
E-mail: ronhenzel@msn.com
Director: Ron Henzel

“Garden” Continued from page 3

God uses each of the various teachers in the way He has gifted them in order to bring about His purposes. They cannot control the spiritual growth of the Church. They can clear the way, provide the pruning, and faithfully teach the Word; but they cannot control the outcome. Paul expresses this idea in his letter to the Philippians. He writes:

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

It is the Holy Spirit’s job to grow the people, not the pastor’s. However, even though the pastors and elders are not responsible for the spiritual and/or numerical growth of the congregation, there are important issues that they *do* affect—for good or ill. The leaders do set the tone and direction for the congregation. Organizations tend to reflect corporately the personality of the leaders. Their views on the nature of the Church and their definitions of authority and servanthood will shape the personality of the local body of believers.

The Corporate Church

As we pointed out in our last issue of the *MCO Journal*, if the church leadership views the church as a place to market the Gospel and broaden their market base, then marketing principles will guide their decisions. In this structure, the personality of the church becomes one of a professional corporation where the CEO (pastor) and board of directors (elders) make policy decisions which will guide the church in numerical and financial growth. Members are encouraged to grow and are promoted over time through corporate ranks into team leader positions. One of the positive aspects of this type of church structure is the opportunity for an individual or group to develop a ministry within the church that really fits how God has gifted and called them. One person may be particularly gifted in the area of finances and is encouraged to teach other believers how to handle their finances. Some, gifted in apologetics, may be profitably called upon to help congregation members who have been caught up in cults or cultic teaching or to prepare others to reach out to the cultists who come to their door. Others are gifted to teach children or lead small groups of adults.

That being said, there are serious concerns regarding this idea of the church as corporation. Within this type of structure, spiritual growth is important, but it is secondary to numerical growth. Sound doctrine is affirmed, but it is not necessarily well-taught as the focus becomes better packaging and promotion. Unfortunately, in this corporate environment, members may choose to serve in various capacities less as a result of personal spiritual growth and more because of a “Membership Contract” that outlines the corporate expectations.

All this is not to say there is no concern for the Gospel

in the corporate-type church. In fact, the very opposite is generally true. The desire to reach the unsaved is such a driving force that the bulk of the time, energy, and talents are devoted to finding better and more successful ways to bring unbelievers into the church, which tends to blunt the Gospel to make it palatable to pagan ears. These churches don’t tend to be authoritarian or legalistic, since the ideal is broadening the market base, not shrinking it. However, there is generally no question that the CEO and board make the decisions, and those who don’t like it can pack up and move on down the road.

Of Captains and Kings

Authoritarian churches take a different personality. The leader or leaders are the unquestioned “boss” and rule from the top down. They hold an unbiblical view of authority that is very similar to the one held by the cults.

We’ll use the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society* (WTBTS) as an example. The June 1, 1967 *Watchtower* states on page 337:

What, can we say, is the basic principle underlying the movement of Jehovah’s living organization? It can be expressed in one word: OBEDIENCE.

And just in case some hapless Jehovah’s Witness doesn’t quite understand the pecking order within the chain of command:

It is a theocratic- organization, ruled from the divine Top down, and not from the rank and file up.¹

Obedience may sound like a fine standard for an allegedly Christian organization to demand of its adherents, until one considers the absolute and unbiblical power this places in the hands of these mortal rulers. Let us not forget: The idea here is not loyal obedience to *God’s Word*, but to mere men! In point of fact, this underlying principle of top-down obedience makes the WTBTS one of the most dangerous of religious cults, with the blood of thousands on their hands, since one major organizational policy that *must be obeyed* unquestioningly is their ban on blood transfusions, even to save a human life! Thousands have died in OBEDIENCE to this completely unnecessary prohibition, that is based upon a gross misinterpretation of a point of Levitical law. Many JWs have even sacrificed the lives of their children to remain “faithful” to a group of old men in Brooklyn, New York—the captains and the kings.

Yet, how close to this cultish view of authority is the one espoused by the supposedly “evangelical” Bill Gothard and his Institute in Basic Life Principles:

After the centurion asked Jesus to come and heal his servant, it occurred to him that just as his life was structured around a “chain of responsibility,” so the kingdom in which God operates must have a similar structure of authority.²

This mistaken view is derived from an incorrect

understanding of the story of the centurion in Matthew 8:5-10. But we have to ask, as we wrote in our book about Bill Gothard!

Is the point of this story that God's kingdom is structured around a "chain of authority" (or "umbrella of protection") similar to that of the Roman Empire? No. The point of this story is the centurion had such great faith in *Who Jesus was*, that he knew Jesus did not need to come to his house in order to heal his servant. Jesus was God. He could heal long-distance.³

In authoritarian churches, as in the cults, the pastor and/or leaders, in an effort to get the congregation committed and serving, resort to ruling the church through the use of guilt, fear, manipulation, and intimidation. In some cases, they may come across as "meek and humble," especially in one-on-one interactions; but there is no question of who is in control. To the individual who has been indoctrinated into an authoritarian mindset, to question the human authority is akin to questioning the authority of God Himself. That, friends, is a lot of power! Add to this the threat that God may punish the "rebellious" doubter by bringing judgment upon him in the form of financial failure, ill health, or family problems; and only the bravest of the brave will call anything into question. The sermons are generally geared around working harder, giving more, and redoubling your efforts to please God and "His servant"—the human leaders. Serving becomes a chore which must be endured in order to be deemed spiritual and worthy of blessing. Having a daily, growing relationship with the Lord is as rare as flying frogs in this environment, while the inevitable discouragement and depression becomes a heavier and heavier burden to bear. The communal personality of an authoritarian church is not one in which believers can let their guard down and trust one another with hurts, struggles, and fears—lest they be deemed unspiritual and possibly judged to be unsaved. It's a long, hard grind in service to a human taskmaster.

Is this a Biblical model for the Church of Jesus Christ? Should the Church have a similar authority structure to that of pagan Rome's (as Bill Gothard and other authoritarians believe)? NO! When the disciples were arguing over which among them was going to be "greatest," Jesus told them:

... The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye [shall] not [be] so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. (Lu. 22:25-26)⁴

This teaching is 180 degrees opposed to top-down rule. The focus is on being a servant. Far from being a king of all he surveys, the leaders in the Church are to be the *servants* of all.

Not only does the authoritarian approach lead to spiritual abuse, it also indicates that the human "rulers" do

not really trust God to take care of His people and bring them to maturity.

Imitate Godly Leaders

Jesus' teaching on Church leadership also helps us to understand a Scripture that often has been misused in the service of authoritarian leaders.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:16-17, NASB)

Submitting here has the idea of choosing to yield to a mature and godly leader—it does not demand unquestioned obedience. It is not burdensome to follow servant leaders, because we observe and imitate their lives as stated in Hebrews 13:7:

—Continued on page 6

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

TO HOST

yOUNG dEfENdERs

BOOT CAMP

Please call for registration

If your church or organization would be interested in hosting a Boot Camp please contact MCOI for more info.

“Garden” Continued from page 5

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. (NASB)

Far from justifying autocratic rule, this passage encourages the believer to *imitate the conduct* of godly leaders. As we have learned from the words of Jesus, what will the *conduct* of the godly leader look like? Here’s a clue: He will look like a servant, *not* a king! If he rules like a king or demands obedience like a tyrant, he is not a godly leader to be emulated at all! As we imitate the faith and conduct of a godly leader, we will learn to be humble servants ourselves—leading by example and focusing on the needs of others.

Body life is much different in a church with Godly leaders. The congregation takes on a personality of humility, kindness, and gentleness as they observe these qualities in the leadership. The Apostle Paul spends a great deal of time on the issue of leadership; and in 2 Timothy 2:24-26, he writes:

The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (NASB)

Kindness, gentleness, patience, and dependence upon God for the outcome are the qualities you will find in a truly godly leader.

No Longer Infants

The individual believer has a responsibility in this as well. Authoritarian leaders would have no one to rule if that power was not given to them by the followers. He would not be able to twist the Scriptures concerning authority or anything else if the individual believer knows well what the Scriptures teach. We are not to give ourselves over to the control of others, and to do so can possibly lead to the shipwreck of our faith. No one is called to put his mind on the shelf and robotically follow others. Rather, we are to grow up in the faith—to leave our dependent childhood behind—so as to be able to distinguish between good

and bad teachers and true or false teaching. Consider the following:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (Ephesians 4:11-14, NIV)

What do we need, Christian, to be able to discern between true and false teaching? Our minds, of course! We have to think, judge, and weigh what we are being taught!

What do we need to determine whether a teacher is good or a “cunning deceitful schemer?” Again, we are going to need an independent mind. You and I are responsible for what we allow ourselves to be taught, and whom we allow to teach us. This is in diametric opposition to the concept of authoritarian subjugation.

To the congregation elders, Peter writes:

To the elders among you, I appeal to you as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you

must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:1-3, NIV)

According to the words of Jesus and the qualifications which the Apostle Peter laid out, leaders are servants, not lords. And the individual congregants are to be mature adults, not infants. They are to work together for the good of the body as a whole.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is our Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:15-16, NIV)

“Authoritarian leaders would have no one to rule if that power was not given to them by the followers. He would not be able to twist the Scriptures concerning authority or anything else if the individual believer knows well what the Scriptures teach...”

Pastoral Care

Being in a counter-cult ministry (Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.), we are all too aware of the problem of authoritarianism and spiritual abuse. But, to change our focus a bit, it is not enough to point the finger at flawed leadership to explain problems in the church. The congregation has a huge responsibility as well. There is undoubtedly spiritual abuse committed by leadership within the church body. However we have identified another big problem which we call pastoral abuse—the maltreatment of the pastor by the parishioners. It is likewise rampant in the church, and it is not pretty. We have certainly witnessed this phenomenon during our church experience over the years—board members who believe that it is their job to make the pastor’s life miserable, people who bring every little slight, real or imagined, to the pastor’s attention so he can “straighten out” the offenders, backbiters, carpers, meddlers, and gossips. Why is there so much burnout among pastors? We have to consider how pastors often are treated by the very people they seek to serve. Ravi Zacharias speaks directly to this issue in his talk, “Is There Not a Cost?”

I have been in churches where people have betrayed one another. Where the infighting becomes like a cancer, and there’s always a broken heart, and sometimes the ones whose hearts are broken most are the young children who do not understand the political ramifications of religious convictions. Stand firm together brethren. Let there be no scheming. If ever you have something against somebody, go to that person. Don’t go behind that person’s back. Listen to what Sidlow Baxter says, “It seems an awful thing to say. Yet it is true that there are betrayers like Schemiah and Noadiah in most Christian congregations today—men and women who have professed conversion to Christ, who share in the fellowship and labors of the saints; who, nevertheless, seem to find cruel pleasure in the fall of a Christian leader. To his face they are friendly, fussy, [and] saintly but behind his back they are mischief makers. They profess loyalty and concern, yet if he slips or falls, they love to gossip it among the brethren and talk it around the town. Oh, what heart pangs such disloyal brethren give to the Christian ministers, pastors, superintendents, and leaders. They are Tobias quislings, Satan’s fifth columnists.”¹⁵

Ravi and Baxter are correct. Congregants, elders, and deacons ought to take a look at the way they are treating *their* pastor. Is he loved and prayed for as much as he is criticized and torn down? Is he expected to grow the church single handedly—fix everything, know everything, and be everything to everyone, but offending none—all the while raising his “perfect” children in a fishbowl? This is not going to work! Give the man a break, please!

A successful church is not one that is the wealthiest, or the largest, or has the most dynamic programs. A truly successful and godly church is one in which love is apparent and God is exalted above all.

To sum up, the Biblical charge to pastors is: Preach the word, protect, warn of dangers, weed and feed, provide

an example worthy to follow, and trust God to provide the increase. The Biblical charge to the congregation: Be mature! Study God’s Word independently, and do not put all the responsibility for your Christian education and growth on your pastor’s shoulders. Hone your discernment skills, and engage the unbelievers around you in a loving and thoughtful way. Love and pray for one another, and show *grace* to your brothers and sisters even (and, perhaps, especially) those who are giving their lives in service to you. ■

*WTBTS is the clergy or government of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

ENDNOTES:

1. *The Watchtower*, December 15, 1971, p.754.
2. *Basic Seminar Textbook* (Oak Brook, IL: Institute in Basic Life Principles, 1979), p.20.
3. Don Veinot, Joy Veinot & Ron Henzel, *A Matter of Basic Principles: Bill Gothard and the Christian Life* (Lombard, IL: Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., 2003), p.106.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Is There Not a Cost?*, Ravi K. Zacharias, (RZIM, Norcross, Georgia), 1996, CD Track 4

RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

Join
Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
for a tour of
ISRAEL
March 6-18, 2005

For more information
call, write, or visit
<http://tinyurl.com/36tva>



DANGEROUS HOME FRONT:

Proof Texts We Know and Love

By John David Ferrer

On a recent trip to Washington, D.C., I found myself going through several airports; and with each airport are the inevitable security checks. In one airport, I had no problems going through the baggage scan and the metal detectors. But at LaGuardia Airport, I was stopped. I innocently had left a small pocketknife on my key chain. Not being a terrorist, I did not think of a one-inch blade as a weapon; however, my pocketknife was confiscated. It was not a big loss, but it was enough to teach me something. One airport had let that pocketknife slip by, whereas the other one—the one in New York—spotted it instantly. In New York, they know the threat of terrorism. Their sensitivities are triggered, and their awareness is raised. They remember that a few box cutters were used to hijack a plane, which would eventually kill over three-thousand people, and violently awake an entire nation to the threat of terrorism. While I am no terrorist (and I miss my little pocketknife), I am glad that the airport security was as tight as it was. New York is safer because of it, and so is America. What is the difference between those two airports? Both know that plane crashes are a real threat. Both have probably undergone the same security regulations training. Both have had to adopt heightened security standards since 9/11. Both see thousands of passengers every day. But in New York, they take their job a little bit more seriously; they have to. The danger is not only real, but obvious, and it has been recently demonstrated in the somber living colors of gray dust and red blood.

Within the Christian Church, how often do we allow dangerous elements to slip under our radar? What bad interpretations of the Bible have we adopted because we did not let their imminent threat rouse us to action? As tragic a disaster as 9/11 was, even more hangs in the balance when it comes to Biblical interpretation. Here eternal souls are the bounty. Here whole denominations are tottering. Here is where God's voice is most clearly heard. But in spite of the gravity of this issue, God's Word still constantly is mishandled, even within circles of well-meaning Christians. Let us look at a few examples. As you will see, the use of Biblical apologetics is not just for counteracting cults. It is quite useful for cleaning house within the Church.

1 Chron. 4:9-10¹

9 Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore [him] in pain." 10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep [me] from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

You probably know this passage well. It is the prayer of Jabez. We need not comment here on the almost cultic phenomenon surrounding the book by this title. But this verse deserves a re-hearing because it is often misrepresented. First, the story is descriptive and not prescriptive. In other words, the story describes what did happen, not necessarily what should happen (especially in our day and age). Second, the passage is much too brief and interjectory to sustain the volumes of theologizing that have been put upon it. Were the passage enriched by a greater historical or circumstantial context or, perhaps, prescriptive in nature, then more could be said of it. But as it stands, there are only two verses in Scripture which deal with Jabez (1 Chron. 4:9, 10) and one verse that mentions a city by that name (1 Chron. 2:55).² Third, the common interpretation that Jabez's prayer is somehow special in its profound insights on blessing is undermined by the facts that Jabez could equally have been blessed for his being "honorable" or for his being an otherwise cursed person under a name that means "pain," for God has always had a heart for the "nobodies" and the "underdogs."³ The prayer may have been mentioned to demonstrate how God blessed in spite of Jabez's words rather than because of them. Fourth, perhaps the most troubling thing about the way this passage has been handled is that it is used as a magic formula—as if there are magic prayers that unlock God's stored up blessings. The text makes no suggestion that this prayer is prescriptive, nor that it mechanically brings about the desired affect. Prayer for Jabez works just as it does for us; it is a relational activity that should be God-centered and the results of which are guaranteed only to fit what God wants whether or not men agree.⁴

Isa. 53:5

But He [was] wounded for our transgressions, [He] [was] bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace [was] upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

This verse, or at least the last phrase of it—"... by His stripes we are healed"—is often quoted in reference to physical healing from diseases and disorders. However, this passage is talking about eternal salvation. Usually the common error in cases like this is to flatten out one's soteriology (theology of salvation) by reading eternity into every earthly deliverance, but here the opposite is done. Isaiah 53 is one of the clearest Messianic and soteriological passages in Scripture. The nature of Christ's eternally redemptive work is explained in this prophecy. To reduce this passage to physical healing is to say that Christ died on the cross so you wouldn't have back trouble. Or Christ rose from the grave to

deliver you from migraines. But the whole thrust of this passage is that the Messiah is not simply assuming the physical pains and sufferings of the world in order to bring about physical relief; He is bearing the load of sin-punishment. In summary, the thrust of this entire chapter is that the Christ dies a substitutionary death for the atonement and spiritual redemption of men. Were a person to make an argument from Scripture for physical healings today, they would do better finding their support elsewhere.

Psalm 118:24

This [is] the day [which] the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

The passage is often cited as a reminder that God makes every day and we should be glad about this fact. One might hear this verse quoted, perhaps in hymn form or in a prayer, bright and early Sunday morning as a commencement for the day's worship service. But this verse is not referring to just any day, but one day in particular. If we examine the larger passage we can find another memorable line in verse 22, "*The stone [which] the builders refused is become the head [stone] of the corner.*" This memorable verse would be repeated by the Apostle Peter hundreds of years later in 1 Peter 2:7 with specific reference to the ministry and work of Christ as a foundation for the building of the Church. Furthermore, Psalm 118:22 suggests that this "day" refers to the day of salvation, and indeed the larger context of Psalm 118 agrees with this interpretation.⁵ The Psalmist is celebrating God's work of salvation and, in verse 24, the particular day in which it occurs.

Prov. 29:18

Where [there is] no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy [is] he.

The word *hazon* interpreted as *vision* is often misunderstood to mean a "vision" in the business sense of goal setting and planning. In church settings, the idea is usually that chaos erupts when the church does not have a set ministry plan; but such an interpretation misrepresents the word *hazon*, for the word refers to divine communication to prophets.⁶ And that "business" interpretation disregards the basic parallelism within this verse.⁷ The first line tells of perishing for lack of vision,⁸ but the second line of the verse explains the object of this vision when it says, "*But he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*" The vision in this case concerns the Law; specifically God's standard as revealed through the prophets. And for those who do not have the Law, it is implied that they do not keep it and suffer unhappiness.

Matt. 7:1

Judge not, lest ye be judged.

This is perhaps the most-quoted verse of Scripture surpassing even John 3:16. Whereas the love of God—as succinctly portrayed in the one-verse Gospel message of John 3:16—was once considered ethically beautiful and a thing to be shared and enjoyed; now, abstaining from "passing judgment" has come to be viewed as the most-prized ethic. However, this verse does not promise freedom from judgment; for all will eventually be judged by God (Revelation 20:11-15). Nor does it even disbar judgment between believers (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 1:20). Rather, in context, this verse cautions against hypocrisy; for the passage that follows chastises the hypocrite who attempts to remove a speck from another man's eye when all along there is a plank in his own

(Matt. 7:1-5). This verse communicates a boomerang effect to one's actions consistent with the rest of the Sermon the Mount in which this verse appears.⁹ In addition, Christ directs His hearers to make judgments with regard to false prophets beginning in verse 15 of chapter seven. In order to "*Beware of false prophets,*" one must judge that they are a false prophet.

Matt. 10:28

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

The problem that rides on this verse is that Satan gets too much credit. One may think, from this verse, that Satan is the one to fear—the one who can "... *destroy both soul and body in hell.*" This misunderstanding seems to be more the product of poor theology than malicious exegesis. For the One who is truly Lord over Hell is not Satan, but it is God (1 Chron. 29:11-14; Ps. 103:19). God is sovereign over everything—hell included. Satan is but a prisoner; God is the warden (Job 1:6-12; Rev. 20:1-3, 10). God is to be feared above all else, even Satan.

Matt. 18:19-20

Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

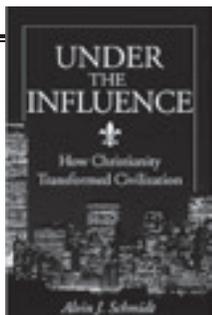
This little passage is one of the most victimized in all of Scripture. First, this verse is often used to justify all shades of "health and wealth" theology—namely the belief that God must give believers *whatever* they ask (no matter how self-centered it may be) as long as they ask God in groups. The second offense is a little more innocent. Christians often quote verse 20 as an invocation of God's presence be it at prayer meetings, worship services, or whatever else. The answer to both of these problems is, again, context. Matthew 18:15-20 is about Church discipline. And the reason the numbers "*two or three*" are mentioned is because those are the numbers of witnesses that were to be brought to testify in the case of a legal or otherwise religious offense. To prevent "he-said she-said" arguments, two or three witnesses were to be brought in to establish a true testimony (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28). Moreover, since only God has the authority to judge (Deut. 32:39; Rom. 12:19), any human judgment over other men was to be done only with God's conferred authority. And in these verses, we see God conferring His authority for judgment only to groups of believers, that is, to a church—the "body of Christ." God's presence to creation is a universal fact (Ps 139:7-12; Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:27-28). So He hardly needs to be invoked at prayer meetings or at church services (recognized, yes, but not invoked). His presence is mentioned here in reference to His conferring authority to believers for the exercising of judgment within the Church.

Eph. 5:22

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

The main problem with the interpretation of this verse is how much is irresponsibly shoved into the tiny little word *submit*.

—Continued on page 17



UNDER THE INFLUENCE

How Christianity Transformed Civilization

By Frank York

Retired (1999) Illinois College Professor of Sociology Dr. Alvin J. Schmidt, who holds an M. Div. from Concordia Seminary and a Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska, has written what should be considered one of the most important books of the twenty-first century.

In a popular culture that seems determined to persecute Christians and to remove every symbol of Christianity's influence from American life, it is refreshing to read a book that so convincingly describes how the followers of Christ gave Western Civilization its ideas of political and religious freedom, respect for human life, and much, much more.

In his book *Under The Influence*,¹ Schmidt lays out the historical evidence in great detail showing that Christians throughout history have taken key leadership roles in protecting infants from abortion; giving women freedom from oppression; setting up hospitals and charities to care for the poor and ill; creating many of the great colleges and universities; developing the free-market economy; promoting science, music, and the arts; and far more.

In his "Introduction" Dr. Schmidt observes:

Many today who disparage Christianity may not know or believe that, were it not for Christianity, they would not have the freedom that they presently enjoy. The very freedom of speech and expression that ironically permits them to castigate Christian values is largely a by-product of Christianity's influences that have been incorporated into the social fabric of the Western world... (p.13)

Christianity's influence on the sanctity of life was evident immediately in the first-century Church. Dr. Schmidt explains how the pagan cultures of both the Greeks and Romans placed little value on human life, and even the great Roman philosopher and politician Cicero justified infanticide for deformed infants.

Christians, however, knew that Christ valued all human life—especially the most vulnerable—and began rescuing infants who had been tossed in the woods to die. Christian families adopted these discarded children and raised them to love the Lord. Christian writers consistently condemned both abortion and infanticide, but they had little power under pagan rulers.

Eventually, the Christian Roman Emperor Valentinian outlawed infanticide in A.D. 374 and criminalized the abandonment of children as well.

It was also the Christian view of the sanctity of human life that eventually brought an end to the gladiator contests in Rome. Christians organized boycotts against the games, and church leaders condemned the wanton taking of human life as entertainment. The games were eventually eliminated by two Christian emperors.

Christianity's Influence on Sexual Morality

Today's culture war pits traditionalists against a paganized popular culture who seek to undermine all morality and to usher in total sexual liberation from all notions of decency or morality. Leading this effort are the militant homosexuals who are not only working to undermine marriage, but also to throw off laws that restrain sexual hedonism.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, for example, is currently working to overturn laws prohibiting public sex in parks and public restrooms. They're also working to overturn laws against prostitution and to lower the age of sexual consent which, in turn, will result in easier access to children.

This current situation mirrors what was occurring in pagan Rome and Greece as Christians were beginning to influence their culture during the early centuries of the Church.

Dr. Schmidt notes that Roman culture promoted depraved relationships between men and women, men and men, and men with boys until Christians began making a difference. Roman author Ovid, for example, described how relationships between men and women were becoming sadistic and masochistic. The Emperor Tiberius used to have male and female prostitutes engage in public sex acts for his entertainment. The Emperor Caligula, a persecutor and murderer of Christians, engaged in incestuous relationships with his sisters and had people tortured during his many sexual escapades. Nero had two boys for sexual pleasure.

Christians, however, faithfully adhered to the teachings of the Scriptures which forbade sex outside of marriage, pedophilia, homosexuality, and other lewd sexual behaviors.

By opposing the Greco-Roman sexual decadence, whether it was adultery, fornication, homosexuality, child molestation, or bestiality, and by introducing God-pleasing sexual standards, Christianity greatly elevated the world's sexual morality. (p.94)

Women Are Freed From Bondage

In both Greek and Roman cultures, women were considered to be the property of their husbands. In fact, the only women who had any freedom at all were prostitutes or the mistresses who escorted men to events outside of the home. A Roman or Greek wife was not allowed to be present with her husband's guests at a meal.

In addition, under Roman law, the father/husband had absolute control over his wife and children—even when the children had become adults. He alone could divorce, and he could execute his own children if he so chose. Roman law also forbade women from speaking in public settings, prohibited women from wearing multicolored robes, or wearing too much jewelry.

However, when Jesus Christ came into the world, He honored women and gave them respect. He violated Rabbinical Law by speaking to women, teaching them, and asking them for a response.

As the early Church took root in pagan cultures, Christians met in the homes of fellow believers; and many of these early worshippers were women who held leadership roles. The Apostle Paul, for example, refers to Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2) as a deacon in the Church at Cenchrea.

Schmidt writes:

The early Christians not only included women in the life of the church, but they also gave them freedom and dignity unknown in the Greco-Roman and Judaic cultures. (p.107)

The influence of Christianity in freeing women from bondage also spread into other cultures where women were persecuted. Under British rule in India, the practice of *suttee* was outlawed in 1829. This centuries-old practice required the widows of their deceased husbands to be burned alive on altars as part of the Hindu religion.

Christian missionaries in China protested against the practice of foot binding for women. This horrid custom was abolished in 1912, but the practice lingered illegally until the 1920s.

Christians Did Charitable Works

Through the teachings of Christ, the early Christians engaged in a variety of charitable works including helping the poor and the abandoned infants, and establishing orphanages and hospitals to care for the less fortunate.

The Greeks and Romans had no such ideas of compassion. In fact, they discouraged efforts to help the poor. The Roman philosopher Plautus wrote:

You do a beggar bad service by giving him food and drink; you lose what you give and prolong his life with more misery. (p.129)

The Christian view was entirely different. By the middle of the fourth century, Christians were establishing orphanages; and this idea spread throughout the Roman Empire. By the thirteenth century, hundreds of orphanages were being operated by monasteries. By the sixth century, Christians were also operating homes for the elderly

throughout the empire.

In America, this belief in Christian charity helped in the formation of dozens of service clubs including the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and YWCA, as well as organizations such as the Baptist Life Association, Catholic Workmen, Lutheran Brotherhood, and more.

Christians were also instrumental in bringing about reforms in child labor laws both in Europe and in the U.S. In England, Christian legislator, Lord Shaftsbury, helped pass the Factory Act of 1833 which limited the number of hours children could work. Other reforms followed.

Christians Introduced Freedom to Individuals

One of the greatest contributions to humankind from Christianity is the idea of liberty under law. This idea stands in stark contrast to the Communist, Socialist, Fascist, and Islamist dictatorships that oppress individual freedom and destroy productivity and individual creativity.

Dr. Schmidt notes that the Magna Carta, signed in 1215 by King John of England, was one of the most significant documents in human history. It forced the king to recognize the following: 1. Justice could not be denied freedmen who were under the authority of barons; 2. no taxes could be levied without representation; 3. no one could be imprisoned without a trial; 3. property could not be taken from anyone without just compensation.

This document ushered in a new era of liberty in England and was the foundation upon which the American view of liberty was built. The Magna Carta was created with the help of Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The principles outlined in the Magna Carta were

—Continued on page 19

Did You Know?

Did you know Don Veinot (speaker, author, and President of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.) is available to speak or teach at your church or Sunday school? A variety of topics are available. If you are interested in setting up a time and date for him to visit your area, please contact our Lombard, IL office @ 630-627-9028.





CULTS IN OUR CULTURE:

Two Case Studies

By Dr. Dave Seaford

We live in a time and place where tolerance is considered more of a virtue than truth, and where truth is more highly valued in used-car salesmen than in the local Church. But the Word of God consistently values the necessity of absolute truth in doctrine and, in fact, professes to be truth (John 17:17). If for no other reason than the high value of a human soul and the credibility of God's Word for salvation, the Church and its pastors should "seek" truth and expose false teachers at every opportunity (James 5:20). I fear that most of us, who have been given the high honor of the office of elder, have missed that call and obligation of the Christian Church. I want to be clear here. I am not speaking of doctrinal differences within the Christian Church that fall within the realm of the "non-essentials." Those things which Christians hold as absolute essentials within the faith include the Virgin Birth of Christ; the Deity of Christ; the Death, Burial, physical Resurrection and Ascension of Christ; His atoning death for our sins; the Trinity; the inerrancy of God's Word; and so on. What I am talking about here is a clear and definitive breach of these essentials of the faith which clearly fall into the realm of Biblical heresy and, thus, the realm of the cults.

According to Dr. Ron Rhodes of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, [one of (if not THE) greatest places of higher learning in Christian apologetics in the world], there are five standards by which we can safely measure any group to see if it embraces the characteristics of a "cult." If a group has all of these characteristics, it is most probably a cult and should be treated as such. The group (according to Dr. Rhodes) will:

1. Deny the absolute authority of the Bible.
2. Deny salvation by faith alone.
3. Deny the efficacy and existence of the Trinity.
4. Devalue Christ's atoning work and His deity.
5. Claim to have new revelation from God.

Taking each one of these standards and looking at some of the potential ramifications and/or manifestations, might help reveal whether or not a group is, indeed, a cult whether it might

even prove dangerous to its followers or your community. This article will make a very abbreviated attempt at procedures for identification of these attributes in specific groups that I have encountered, but I will not have the space here to expound on those characteristics or procedures in any detail.

First I want to say, particularly to pastors, elders, and deacons of local churches, that you do NOT have to have a master's degree in apologetics to address cult issues that may be right there in your own communities. Furthermore, every Christian should be alert to these groups—large or small, well known or not-so-well known. These groups are potentially a threat to the physical and spiritual well being of your church and your community as well as an eternal threat to those that become a part of any such group. As Christians who carry the very Name of Christ and the commission He has given each of us, it is incumbent upon every Christian to go back and read Acts 20 and the epistles (especially 1 Timothy) and carefully confront the false teachings of these cults that exist all around each of us. Any of the five characteristics listed that are being proclaimed (even quietly) by any group should be lovingly exposed and dealt with Biblically so as to be the shepherds and the Christians whom we are called to be. Allow me to say compassionately that anything less is scripturally a dereliction of duty.

How should we engage these groups and their leaders, and what should be our approach in doing this? It should go without saying that each group will be a little different, but herein are some guidelines I have used and specific examples of cultish groups (groups with one or more, but not all of the characteristics listed), as well as full-fledged cults, that I have engaged locally. (I will not address issues surrounding the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or other such groups for which much very good material has already been written.) While these suggestions certainly should not be taken as the final nor complete word for all other groups, they should be helpful as you plan to engage those in your community for which this article IS intended. The focus here will be on less-well-defined groups and their leaders that could include the Gothards and Shamblins of this world; but more specifically,

I will address those groups and leaders most people never hear of until they become national news (like the Jim Joneses and David Koreshes). IF you think that these types do not exist in your community, you are probably living within the blinders of your own church walls. No Christian group in Waco saw Koresh as a particular threat; and no church nor church leaders, whom I personally know of, were engaging them in a direct and loving way prior to political and legal action, which is almost always less effective and more devastating when unilaterally applied. It seems these groups are everywhere I go these days, and yet, they remain undetected—or at least undiagnosed—by well-meaning Christians who (rather than rock the boat) leave heresies unaddressed and false teachings unchallenged in the minds of their relatives, loved ones, and coworkers. Somehow, much of the Church universal has bought the tolerance bill of goods which has sold us the “product” of the tolerance movement – “short term ‘peace’ (with these groups) as the expression of Christian love.” It is without hesitation that I tell you this is not only NOT the solution, it is NOT Christian love, and it IS a direct barrier and real complication in effectively reaching these people for Christ.

The first thing any Christian (who purposes to engage these cultish or cult groups) needs to adjust is their attitude toward the group and its individual leader. These people are NOT our personal enemies. They are people whom God loves and for whom Christ died. As such, they both need and deserve our “... *speaking the truth in love* ...” (Eph. 4:15). On strictly a fleshly level, you taking them on as the enemy will nearly always end in disaster and, at the very least, will close all doors to being able to be an “effective” witness.

In two cases where we began working on reports of cultish activities, we found that each were predicting, with some specificity, the time of the “end” of the world and the coming of the Lord. Acts 1:7 says regarding the return of the Lord that “... *It is not for you to know the times or seasons* ...”. The word *times* here is very clear. The Greek word used designates both very specific times AND very broad segments of time. In other words, no man has any idea of God’s timing for the return of Jesus Christ. At least two groups in our community profess to have narrowed down the time to “**within days or weeks**” of the imminent return of Christ and the “.” One of these groups claims to have their own messiah (who lives right here in Cortez, Colorado) and is preparing for the world to be consumed by fire within the next “days.” They base this prophecy not on God’s Word (historically, grammatically, and literally taken) but on the word and scriptural interpretations of “a man” (William Branham) who died back in 1965, and whose death was to “immediately” usher in the visible return of the “mighty angel” of Revelation 10:1-2. This same messiah prophesied that the end of the world would come in 1977. Now that this date has come and gone, you would expect people to return to truth (or at least to their senses) and no longer depend on the ramblings of an obvious false prophet. The leader (mes-

siah—Dan Dorelarque) of this local group (who bases their faith on the teachings of the dead prophet Branham) just returned from Egypt declaring a “**sign**” that is “**fresh from the Lord**” (new revelation) that in “**days, weeks, months, but not years,**” all of us (non-members of their group) will be consumed by fire, but that their group’s bodies will come through the fire without harm and be walking on the ashes of the rest of us.

Discovering Planet “X”

Last September (2003), another local group (disguised as a Missionary Baptist Church, but not espousing the mainstream Missionary Baptist doctrine) claimed that Christ would return in that month and take them out of this world. Needless to say, they are still here and so are many of us; so I don’t believe the Rapture actually happened then either. Today, this same group is preaching something about what they call planet “X” and Christ’s return this March. Planet “X” is apparently an Aquarius-type aligning of the planets which will reveal some new world that they have dubbed “X.” This, they say, will begin the unfolding of humanity’s last days on earth.

On a national level, the Rev. Moon (of the Moonies) recently appeared publicly with a huge crown on his head, stood before the media, and declared himself the “Messiah.” The followers of one of the Cortez groups declare their leader the “Messiah;” and the largest and fastest growing cult in South Africa (The Zion Christian Church, of which there is nothing Christian) have long claimed their own “messiah.” (Of course, two of their “messiahs” have died already with no resurrection and they are now on their third “messiah.”

David Koresh was a messiah. Jim Jones was a Messiah. The Heaven’s Gate cult (of Hale-Bop comet fame) had their messiah. There will be many who come in the cloak of a messiah; and the

Bible tells us exactly what we should not do, and how we are to react to them:

“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here [is] the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe [it]. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look He is in the desert!’ do not go out; [or] ‘Look, [He] [is] in the inner rooms!’ do not believe [it].” (Matt. 24:23-26)

We also know that when Christ truly comes, there will be no doubt of His coming. It will be on the world stage, and all people will be proven to be without excuse (cf. Romans 1:20 and 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

This prediction of end-time scenarios is also common in many cults and cultish groups. Both Jones and Koresh capitalized on several instinctive attributes of sinful man that center on the gnostic desire of man to know something of the future and on the human nature of feeling privileged and special for knowing what

—Continued on page 14

“Cults” Continued from page 14

others do not. These are also “Marks” of the Missionary Baptist group and Dan Dorelarque’s (Messiah) cult that we confronted here (in Cortez) over the last several years. Using them as examples here, allow me to point you to several things that work in dealing with these groups and others that clearly do not.

This particular Missionary Baptist splinter group is technically a “cultish” group that we began hearing rumblings about over two years ago. At first, the things we were hearing seemed bizarre to us coming out of a Baptist-affiliated church. The issues that surfaced first were control-oriented and seemed more focused on church government and proper handling of money than on more important doctrinal positions. But this was just a symptom of bigger problems. This past year (2003) we began to get “visitors” to our church from Missionary Baptist. As I got to know the people better, I found remarkably similar stories that relayed clear teachings from the pulpit of Missionary Baptist that the “end” was coming in September of that same year.

After receiving the third-such independent report, I made an appointment to go “visit” with the pastor (leader). This is the first step that I would suggest with any group of this type. The purpose of this meeting should be stated when setting the appointment. You never want to surprise the cult leader nor make them feel hijacked or trapped. Always be upfront in stating the purpose. In each of these cases, I simply stated that I had heard some things that were being taught by their ministry that I wanted to explore. In addition, my conscience would not allow me to repeat those things nor take a stand for or against them without getting the story straight from them instead of a second- or third-hand account. In using this approach, I have never once been turned down. Most have honestly appreciated my candor and unwillingness to simply repeat rumors (which most of the time are inaccurate in some form).

This approach also puts me in the *asking* role; and thus, does not set me up automatically as the adversary. It is important to go into these meetings as a “learner” of *what* they know and *how* they know it. Again, this position of seeking knowledge and the source of authority of that knowledge allows one to either confirm or eliminate two of the five characteristics of a cult, while simultaneously allowing the cult leader to do what he does best and loves most: deliver a well-rehearsed theology. You will view him at his best (or worst, depending on your view) and see with more clarity that with which you are dealing. During this time, ask if it is okay if you make notes. Most will be inhibited if they think you are recording it, so don’t (even secretly). In the case of this Missionary Baptist Church, this was a moot point anyway. Within the first 20 minutes of the meeting, another person came into the room, the pastor became extremely nervous, abruptly ended the conversation, and asked me to leave. Subsequently, I have had a fourth report confirming all the teachings, and a fifth report with Missionary Baptist’s own literature explaining in “scientific” terminology and skilful use of smoke and mirrors, pieces of the planet “X” theology they are now teaching.

Once the leaders have been approached and information gathered, a tract for this specific group can be put together that can simply be handed to their members by your church members as they are encountered in the community. Again, the nature and demeanor of this tract is very important. Take your time and put it together with great thought. It should address issues and facts,

and not feelings or personalities. It should plant questions in the reader’s mind using Scripture and not overtly tear the belief system apart. It should be understood that most of these followers are heavily invested into these groups and will instinctively attack and shut down conversations with those whom *they* feel are being unfair or who are forcefully taking apart what the cult leader has already told them “we” (mere mortals) can **not** possibly understand. The idea is to gently and progressively show them that the emperor has no clothes! If you go for the throat, you may win the argument, but you will almost always lose the war. Remember: A soul is a terrible thing to waste on the winning of an argument, and this is our objective – the winning of a soul!

Jesus is Here, and He Looks Like Dan

In the case of the Dorelarque cult, I tried for nearly two years to get a meeting with the messiah/leader, with him successfully evading me at every turn. I literally did not even get a chance to speak with him personally for over 30 months. By a caveat of God’s sovereignty (ha), when I least expected it, I had an opportunity. I literally stepped off a curb into the street in front of his truck as he was getting ready to pull out of a parking spot, held up my hand, motioned for him to roll down the window, and went over to introduce myself.

As I began, “Hi, my name is,” he stopped me and assured me that he knew exactly who I was. (Another great lesson, that I could have blown right there without some experience, is: “Don’t ever be visibly shaken by the overt acts or words of these guys. Quiver on the inside if you must; but if they think they know how to shake you, they will return to the ploy often. If, on the other hand, you show no reaction to even the most bizarre behavior, they will normally treat you civilly.) Dorelarque and I set a meeting which he failed to attend. A second meeting was set up, and there again, he failed to attend it and failed even to return my calls.

Eventually, the wife of one of our elders met him on the street, confronted him in front of some of his followers, and somewhat embarrassed him into setting up a third meeting. He did show, and the meeting lasted 3 hours and 40 minutes. I had researched and prepared for this meeting for over two weeks and sought out those that had dealt with Branham-type cults in the past. But I only thought I was ready for Dan. He showed up with his trademark smile, warm greeting, and immediately wanted me to restate the purpose of the meeting, which I did assuring him that I just did not want to misrepresent his positions and teachings. He complimented me for that stance, and we began what would be an occasionally intense, often bizarre, and always challenging meeting. Simply by asking questions, his group was revealed to exhibit all five characteristics of a cult. When I shared that with him, he smiled and actually seemed quite pleased. Given, as he stated, that he considered the modern-day church to be the “**mark of the beast**,” one can understand his sense of pride in being considered a cult by those in the church.

As I questioned Dan on each of the clearly failed Branham prophecies composed in his own teachings, he simply declared them as actually having happened—even the one concerning the end of the world in 1977. As can be imagined, this somewhat startled me given the fact that I actually thought I was sitting right there in front of him. In short, Dan has several realities outside

of the physical time line with which we are all familiar. One is a spiritual time line that actually proceeds the physical time line. Interestingly, Dan is the only one that can see into the “prism” and thus see that the end DID come “spiritually” in 1977. This is just a taste of how slippery these cult leaders are. Don Veint told me that this meeting “**would be like trying to nail jell-o to a wall.**” But that would have been an easy task comparatively. Don’s description fell well short of the feat in which I felt I was engaged many times during the meeting, which seemed more like attempting to nail water to the air.

Probably the most frightening part of the interview was when I finally got Dan to admit that he believed himself to be the third coming of the messiah. He stated that he believed William Branham (that late 50’s and early 60’s self-proclaimed prophet who had an extravagant healing ministry) to be the second coming of Christ. Prompted again by questions, Dan revealed that he did believe in the physical Resurrection of Christ. At this, I asked if Branham had the Spirit of Christ, where was Christ’s body? He indicated that Branham’s body WAS Christ’s body. So, intently looking him in the eye, I asked: “So, am I literally looking at the body of Jesus Christ as I look at you?” And without hesitation, a smile came across his face as he clearly and proudly said, “Yes.”

During the conversation, however, a door did open which I saw as a great opportunity—this is what you are looking for. So, keep probing until God opens a door. Dan revealed, at one point, that he was no longer a Branhamite and that, in fact, William Branham’s son (Joseph) had declared Dan a heretic (the pot calling the kettle black). Dan prophesied that Joseph would have a change of heart, come to Cortez personally, and proclaim Dan the Messiah (again all of this was to happen) “**within days, weeks, months but not years.**” So I began to try to clarify the statement “**but not years.**” Finally, after some time, he agreed that it would not be over two years and one day till this event would happen. At this, I suggested a “pact” between us: If Joseph shows up in Cortez making this proclamation, Dan will arrange a meeting with just the three of us, and I will listen, and we will all return to the Scriptures to see if it all fits. IF, on the other hand, Joseph does not show up in Cortez in this time frame, Dan will sit down with me, admit that he was wrong about it all, and take a fresh look at the Gospel. He agreed and I marked my computer calendar to remind me when the time comes.

Admittedly, there is some urgency with this group and a tract is being prepared for his followers based on all the information gathered in the interview. This is one of the purposes of the interview. Get it straight so that you can develop an accurate and specific apologetic. Carry it lovingly to the cult followers. Remember, the idea is to cause them to question, NOT successfully negotiate and conclude the argument.

May God richly bless you as you endeavor to win this very difficult part of the world for Christ! 

All quotations are from the New King James version of the *Holy Bible*.

Dr. Dave Seaford is the Pastor of Faith Bible Church in Cortez, CO. He can be contacted at d_seaford@msn.com.



Speaking Schedule

Mark your calendars and plan to join MCOI at the following events!

November 6-7

Word of Life Community Church
5806 E. 137th St.
Grandview, MO 64030

November 9 & 17

Harvest Bible Chapel
800 Rohlwing Road
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008
Jehovah’s Witnesses
7:00 PM

February 24-26, 2005

EMNR Conference
“Clash of Cultures:
Christianity in the
Marketplace of Religion”
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Kansas City, Missouri
www.emnr.org

March 6-18, 2005

Tour to Israel
For more information,
visit our web site or call.
\$100.00 deposit reserves your space.

May 5-9

Santa Fe Conference on
Biblical Discernment
Calvary Santa Fe
2520 Camino Entrada
Santa Fe, NM 87507
505-988-3291
505-984-8488 (fax)
www.calvarysantafe.org

For The Furtherance Of The GOSPEL

By Pastor E. Lynn Howe

Many Church leaders today are engaged in a cultural struggle over the direction of the Church. How can loving, following, and serving Jesus Christ become so divisive? The question at the heart of the controversy is: “Does man or God control the future and direction of the Church?” The proverbial camel is now settled inside the tent; it must be recognized and examined in the light of Scripture. We live in a day when the church has become intoxicated with trying to be relevant, all in the name of trying to reach people with the Gospel of Christ. This noble motive is good, but it is inconsistent with Biblical teaching concerning the purpose of the Church. The Church is a God-called body of believers whose sole purpose is to glorify Jesus Christ; thus, its basic appeal is to those who have been made new by the power of God. The focus of the Church is God Who is the Creator of all things, Who provided complete redemption on the cross, and Who promised to build His Church through earthen vessels. It is good to know that church history repeatedly declares that while man-centered movements fail; God has, is, and will continue to preserve and build His Church.

Methodology has largely replaced relationships within the church. The right marketing approach plus the latest larger-than-life electronic presentation is said to be the key to building Christ’s Church; man and his wisdom will make it happen. This “seeker-friendly” or “purpose-driven” approach employs: a contemporary and its *esprit de corps*, preaches a non-offensive positive message, helps people to get in touch with their “true self,” removes all the “church stuff,” and avoids Biblical terms which only “confuse” the seeker. Fellowship has become party time. Above all, do not let the Cross of Christ become an offense. The church is best seen as a community center offering shopping-mall motifs to meet the needs of the natural man. From the mood music, to the snack bar, to the Bible bookstore, with classes for every problem, folks can have their physical and spiritual needs met. *Success* has been re-defined as *mega*; after all, so many people can’t be wrong. To grow, just take the right class or complete the

appropriate seminar for spiritual growth, instead of being challenged to spend a lifetime in joyful submission to God, feeding on His Word so as to become conformed to Jesus Christ.

Leadership should rely on the historic stand of the Church that salvation is of God, Christian growth is of God, and the Church is a community of servants who have witnessed God do “... *exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think ...*”. (Eph. 3:20) Leaders were chosen on Biblical criteria—humble characters who were used by God to shepherd His Church. Shepherds were not told to fit the mold of the modern corporate CEO. The blessing of God produces a greater sense of humility and responsibility because of what *He* has done. As a sinner, man comes to acknowledge his personal sin and eternal condemnation because of that sin, with the regenerating work of God, the Holy Spirit, resulting in saving faith. Knowing that God is the Author and Finisher of our faith produces humble devotion to the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world.

The Apostle Paul faced a similar dilemma (Philippians 1:12-18) as he, too, wrestled with the issue of the Gospel being furthered through earthen vessels.

In prison because of his love and service for Christ, he noted that this persecution produced boldness in the early disciples. The Apostle Paul observed in his day that “*some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will ... selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction [to Paul] ...*,” but some proclaimed Christ “... *out of love ...*” (Phil. 1:15). Paul’s summary of the matter is found in Philippians 1:18: “*What then? Only [that] in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.*”

All Scripture quotes from: *The Holy Bible*, New King James Version, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

Pastor E. Lynn Howe, (photo unavailable) is the pastor of the West Side Baptist Church of Billings, MT. The church is committed to glorifying Jesus Christ by obeying the Scriptures as sole authority of faith and practice.

“Methodology has largely replaced relationships within the church. The right marketing approach plus the latest larger-than-life electronic presentation is said to be the key to building Christ’s Church...”

“Homefront” Continued from page 9

Oddly enough, in the Greek, the word *submit* is nowhere in this verse. Nonetheless, the word is inferred, but as a carry over from the previous verse which is addressed to the whole church, **“Submitting (*hupotassomenoi*) yourselves one to another in the fear of God”** (Eph. 5:21).¹⁰ Whatever submission may mean in Ephesians 5:22 (and there is not enough room in this article to fully address that issue), it is to be found first as a mutual submission characterizing the entire Church—every spouse included.

Rev. 3:15-16

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

It is tempting to want this verse to mean that God prefers spiritual coldness (disbelief, hostility, inactivity, uselessness) to lukewarm spirituality (hypocrisy, casual Christianity). However, that interpretation would mean that God wills disbelief (or hostility, inactivity); and thus, God not only permits disbelief, but He prefers it—that is, He wants it. This idea is dangerous enough in that it suggests that God is guilty of evil. It also presents a stiff challenge to Scriptures such as 1 Timothy 2:4 which says, **“[God] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”** Such a misinterpretation also suffers contextual blindness. John was addressing the wealthy Church of Laodicea which was inconveniently located south of Hierapolis, known for its therapeutic hot springs, and north of Colosse with its cold refreshing waters.¹¹ Laodicea, not having an adequate water source of its own, brought it in from outside sources. Thus, the water they acquired was lukewarm and dirty by the time it reached them. John, therefore, is drawing the contrast between the therapeutic hot springs and the revitalizing cold springs (both good options), and between these two is the fetid lukewarm water of Laodicea.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Usually this verse is taken to be an evangelistic invitation; however, the context reveals that John is still talking to the Church at Laodicea. That is, John is addressing believers. This knocking and calling is not unto salvation, for that much is already assured to these believers. Instead, the invitation is to a deeper fellowship with God.

So What’s the Big Deal?

Clearly, misinterpretation occurs often within the Church. Does that mean the Church is apostate or heretical? Not really, but it does mean that we make mistakes. Many of these mistakes go unnoticed and never cause any real damage. But other mistaken interpretations do sink in and take root springing up into dangerous beliefs and practices. Consider how many people have watched a loved one pass away, even though they prayed in groups for God to heal them, and, as a result, their faith was shattered (see Matt. 18:19-20 on p.9). Or consider how many people think that the Bible instructs them to fear Satan, and as a result, they have developed a paranoid superstition over Satan’s abilities despite the fact and assurance of God’s sovereignty (see Matt. 10:28). And even well-intended misinterpretation, such as the evangelistic use of Revelation 3:20, can cause trouble. If people are won to Christ

through misinterpretation, what precedent does that set for their continued growth in prayer and Bible study? Can men willfully disrespect God’s Word and still respect God?

Sound interpretation is important because what good is an inerrant Word if we disregard the available correctives to keep our interpretation true? And even though God can guide and preserve orthodoxy, we should not be so presumptuous as to assume that the Holy Spirit will always make up for our interpretational mistakes, especially when we should already know better than to make those mistakes. God has provided man with an inspired inerrant Word, and He has provided enough resources (natural and spiritual) to access and apply it. We are in no place to deal half-heartedly with such a precious revelation as God’s Word. If we dare to misinterpret it, then we flirt with bad theology; and bad theology is idolatry.

Basics of Interpretation

What, then, are some of these correctives we have to help us interpret Scripture? Below are a few key principles to keep in mind as you study God’s Word.

1. Context, Context, Context

Respect historical, cultural, circumstantial, and textual context (that is, the larger passage). These help keep your interpretation well-oriented and well-anchored.

2. The Bible can never mean what it never originally meant.

Any given passage will have only one meaning. That is the normal mode of communication. This meaning may have endless applications, multiple sub-points, word plays, and metaphors, but the meaning it once had is the one meaning it always has. Without this boundary line, there is little defense against the various interpretations offered by cult groups, the apostate, or schismatic Christians.

3. When we share common particulars with the audience being addressed, God’s Word to them is the same as it is to us.

This rule deals in application guiding us in the right uses of God’s Word. Where our particulars differ from that of the original audience, then we cannot directly apply that element of that passage of Scripture.

4. Scripture interprets Scripture.

The Bible is a big book, and for most topics there are at least a handful of passages that will apply in some manner. Consider the overall Biblical message by comparing verses and passages within Scripture. Where new or unfamiliar passages arise, let the already-understood passages serve as the sound interpretation of the rest of Scripture.

5. Let the clear passages predominate.

Some passages will stand out as clear and accessible. Let these passages provide guidance in the interpretation of related, but more difficult, passages.

6. If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense; lest you end up with nonsense.

Much of Scripture is readily understandable to the honest reader. Let Scripture speak out clearly as much as possible, and seek no other sense unless the Scriptures themselves defy such a ready interpretation.

—Continued on page 18

Conclusion

If you have found yourself setting off the Christian metal detectors by innocently retaining potentially harmful misinterpretations, then hopefully these principles will help you in future study. But you will probably find out soon (if you have not already) that even the best interpreters can benefit from some outside resources. For a good introduction to interpretation see *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stewart.¹² For some free Bible study software see www.e-sword.org and www.freebiblesoftware.com. And you may also want to invest in some more-specialized resources as well.¹³ These materials range from free, to costing an arm and a leg. But, whatever the cost, they may yet prove to be of eternal value.

In closing, it must be said that though interpretation can be very difficult, most of its difficulty is simply our impatience and pride. We can, therefore, solve most of our mistakes in interpretation by patiently and humbly searching out the meaning of a text as we suspend our immediate impressions and test our possible understandings. True, many passages will remain debatable and even mysterious. But, on the whole, Scripture is clear enough for us to believe, practice, and communicate the true Biblical Christian faith. As guardians of the faith, we should be like the security personal at LaGuardia airport taking our job seriously. Keep the big picture in mind, including all the various dangers, so that you take seriously your job as a guardian of the faith. God's Word is weighty and powerful. Handled poorly it can be a disaster, but handled wisely it is the very power of God to change the world. 📖

John David Ferrer is a student at Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, NC and Associate Pastor at North Rock Hill Church in Rock Hill, SC.



ENDNOTES:

1 Since many misinterpretations have ties to the KJV, or at least were first proliferated under the KJV-popular era, all Scripture verses are from the KJV unless otherwise noted.

2 James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Lynchburg, VA: Old Time Gospel Hour, n.d.), 534.

3 This point hardly needs defense. Nonetheless for God's Word as it concerns the care of the poor, destitute, and otherwise "lowly" see: Ex 22:25-27; 23:11; Le 19:9, 10; 23:22; 25:25-28, 35-37, 39-43; De 14:28, 29; 15:2-14; 24:12-21; 26:12, 13; 1Sa 2:7; Ne 8:10; Job 5:15, 16; 31:15; 34:18, 19, 28; 36:6, 15; Ps 9:18; 10:14; 12:5; 14:6; 34:6; 35:10; 37:21, 26; 41:1-3; 68:10; 69:33; 72:2, 4, 12-14; 74:21; 102:17; 107:9, 36, 41; 109:31; 112:4, 5, 9; 113:7, 8; 132:15; 140:12; 146:5, 7; Pr 22:2, 22, 23; 28:27; 29:7, 13; 31:9, 20; Ec 5:8; Isa 1:17; 11:4; 14:30, 32; 16:3,4; 25:4; 29:19; 41:17; 58:7, 10; Jer 20:13; Eze 18:7, 16, 17; Da 4:27; Zep 3:12; Zec 7:10; 11:7; Mt 5:42; 11:5; 19:21; 25:35, 36; Mr 14:7; Lu 3:11; 4:18; 6:30; 7:22; 11:41; 12:33; 14:12-14; 16:22; 18:22; 19:8; Ac 20:35; Ro 12:8, 13, 20; 1Co 13:3; 16:1,2; 2Co 6:10; 9:5-7; Ga 2:10; 6:10; Eph 4:28; 1Ti 5:9, 10, 16; Heb 13:3; Jas 1:27; 2:2-9, 15, 16; 5:4; 1Jo 3:17-19. Naves Topical Bible (No Bibliographical Data given) in Gramcord [CD ROM] (Vancouver, WA; Gramcord Institute, 1998), "Poor."

4 The intimacy of the Psalms, which themselves tend to be as much prayers as songs, bear witness to the personal and relational nature of prayer. And it is a plain fact that prayers often go unanswered or at least answered with a "No." But God also accomplishes everything He intends to accomplish (1 Chron. 29:11-14; Ps. 104:27-30; Isa. 14:24, 26-27; 55:11). Therefore, prayer is only guaranteed to bring about the desired results when those desired results align with God's plans. Furthermore,

the only prayer in the New Testament era that can be argued as a formulaic prescription is the Lord's Prayer found in Matt. 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. But even this appears more to be an outline rather than a formulaic prescription, for of all the prayers to be found in the rest of Scripture, nowhere else is the Lord's Prayer repeated verbatim.

⁵ "Salvation" refers here both to temporal salvation (IE: "earthly deliverance") and eternal salvation. Psalm 118 is rich with imagery of God's immanence and direct earthly salvation. Indeed, temporal salvation is the predominant kind suggested in Psalm 118 but in verse 19, the setting begins to shift saying, "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, [and] I will praise the LORD, 20 This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. 21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." This reference to "gates of righteousness," like the "gates" in Psalm 100:4, suggest God's abode. And the Petrine interpretation of Psalm 118:22 as seen in 1 Pet. 2:7 bolsters this interpretation. Indeed the Psalmist believes God to be his Savior in warfare, but also His Savior unto Heaven. For more on the ancient Hebrew expectations of the Kingdom of Heaven see Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona, IN: BMH, 1987).

⁶ Allen P. Ross notes, "The word *hazon* refers to divine communication to prophets (as in 1 Sam 3:1) and not to individual goals that are formed The prophetic ministry was usually in response to the calamitous periods, calling the people back to God—*hazon* meaning *revelatory vision* should be retained. If there is no revelation from God, people can expect spiritual and political anarchy (Alden, p. 202)." Allen P. Ross, *Proverbs in Expositor's Bible Commentary* Vol. 8 [CD ROM] (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), Prov. 28:19.

⁷ Parallelism is the pairing of related lines for literary affect be it emphasis, contrast, development, cause and affect, question and answer, etc. For excellent studies on Hebrew parallelism see James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ., 1981); and Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*.

⁸ The term for "perish," *para* means to "let go," "unbind," or "uncover" and is variously rendered as "unrestrained" (NASB), "cast off restraint" (NIV, ASV, NKJV), or "made naked" (Young's Literal). Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, Reprint from the 1906 ed., 7th printing (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003) 828, Strongs #6544.

⁹ This boomerang affect is visible in Matthew 6:14-15, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (See also Matt. 7:2, 12).

¹⁰ Kurt Aland, and others, eds. *The Greek New Testament* 4th rev. ed. 8th printing (Germany: United Bible Societies, 2004).

¹¹ Robert H. Mounce, "The Book of Revelation"—Rev. Ed. in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 109-10.

¹² 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). A good introduction to literary hermeneutics is Leland Ryken, *How to Read the Bible as Literature ... and Get More Out of It* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984). Also good is, Grant R. Osborne's *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1991). This edition would probably have benefited from collaboration with specialists in philosophy and related fields, but overall this text is strong. Unfortunately, many evangelical texts disqualify themselves from safe recommendation because they deny objective Biblical interpretation. For more on this issue see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 1-195 and Thomas A. Howe, "Toward a Thomistic Theory of Meaning" [Master's Thesis] (Charlotte, NC: Independently Published, 2000).

¹³ The standard Greek Lexicon is W. Bauer, trans. and rev. by W.F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). The standard Hebrew lexicon is that of F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs (cited above in endnote 8). And the standard concordance is James Strong, ed. *The New Exhaustive Concordance* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985). One tremendously helpful Bible program is GRAMCORD [CD Rom] (see endnote 3). This program allows not only for word searches among different translations and in the original language, but it also allows for searches of phrases and grammatical constructions. Some helpful sources for commentary on difficult or misrepresented Scriptures include Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); and Walter C. Kaiser and others, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1996).

"Influence" Continued From page 11

amplified in later history through the writings of such Christian theologians and philosophers as Martin Luther, John Locke, and others.

John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (1690) maintained that government existed to uphold the natural law, and that tyranny violated these natural rights granted to mankind by God.

Locke's writings influenced our Founding Fathers in the writing of the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution, thus giving Americans a system of government unrivaled in the world.

Dr. Schmidt quotes historian Carlton Hayes, who has observed:

Wherever Christian ideals have been generally accepted and their practice sincerely attempted, there is a dynamic of liberty; and wherever Christianity has been ignored or rejected, persecuted or chained to the state, there is tyranny. (p.270)

Christians Introduce the Free Market

In Roman and Greek cultures, manual labor was considered demeaning and a task for slaves, yet the principles of Christianity placed a high value on the dignity of hard work and industriousness. Dr. Schmidt observes:

...capitalism is a by-product of Christianity's value of freedom applied to economic life and activities. To be sure, the economic freedom of capitalism can be abused and misused, and on occasion this has unfortunately happened. (p.207)

Dr. Schmidt asks a compelling question:

Is it merely accidental that the greatest amount of freedom and the accompanying economic prosperity happen to exist in countries where Christianity has had, and continues to have, a dominant presence and influence? (p.207)

Nations that have adopted Communist or Socialist economic systems typically stifle individual freedom and discourage productivity. One need only look at the economic systems of South Korea compared to North Korea to notice the stark contrast between free enterprise and Communism—where the state controls all economic activities.

Christians' Legacy

Dr. Schmidt's book includes additional chapters on how Christians helped abolish slavery in England and the United States; influenced amazing discoveries in science; and created brilliant architecture, music, and art.

The entire world has benefited from the influence of Christians and Christian ideals throughout human history. Regrettably, most Christians—myself included—have never understood the contributions Christians have made to the kind of world in which we live.

Dr. Schmidt's book is must-reading for any Christian who wants to understand the importance of Christianity not only in one's personal life, but also in how Christian principles provide for both political and religious freedom.

Throughout the book, Dr. Schmidt warns of the dangers of the paganization of our culture by individuals and groups that are seeking to strip away the moral foundations of our nation. Christianity in America is forever linked to the ideals of individual liberty and Biblical morality. When Christian principles are stripped away, we will lose liberty, and our nation will plunge into the kind of decadence that existed in first-century Rome and Greece.

Under the Influence is not only a compelling history book; it is a call to action for Christians in the twenty-first century to influence their culture as did Christians throughout human history. Will we heed the call? ■

Frank York (photo unavailable) is a freelance writer who lives in Nashville, Tennessee. He works as editorial director for the Traditional Values Coalition and is author of several books including *Protecting Your Child In An X-Rated World* and *When The Wicked Seize A City*. He formerly worked for Focus on the Family, Concerned Women for America, and the Christian Broadcasting Network.

ENDNOTES:

1. Alvin J. Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), p13. All page references contained within parentheses are to this publication.p13

"... a must read for all thinking believers who wish to protect their churches."
—Dr. Jay Adams
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, PA

A MATTER of BASIC PRINCIPLES
Bill Gothard & the Christian Life
Don Veinot, Joy Veinot and Ron Henzel

"... a much needed book that should be read by virtually all evangelical pastors—and all supporters of Bill Gothard"
—Dr. Robert E. Stewart
Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Theology
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
New Orleans, LA

Available at your local Christian bookstore or on-line at www.midwestoutreach.org

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.

Journal

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
P.O. Box 455
Lombard, IL 60148-0455

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LOMBARD, IL
PERMIT NO. 1

Address Service Requested.

OH NO!
Don't Let This Be Your Last Issue



In This Issue!

- Lessons From The Garden**Page 1
By L.L.(Don)Veinot
- Dangerous Home Front**.....Page 8
By John D. Ferrer
- Under The Influence**Page 10
By Frank York
- Cults in our Culture**.....Page 12
By Dr. David Seaford
- For the Furtherance of the Gospel**.....Page 16
By Pastor E. Lynn Howe

