

# The Presbyterian Guardian

VOL. 43, NO. 9 - NOVEMBER, 1974

**inflation**

**STOCKS**

**POLLUTION**

**Crisis**

**BUDGET**

**jobs**

**fuel costs**

**electric bill**

**PRICES**

**energy**

**food bills**

**oil**

**money**

**DEPRESSION**

## CHAP. II.

<sup>1</sup> *The prayer of Jonah: 10 He is delivered out of the belly of the fish.*  
**T**HEN Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

<sup>2</sup> And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

<sup>3</sup> For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves compassed me.

<sup>4</sup> Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

<sup>5</sup> The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depths closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

<sup>6</sup> I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

<sup>7</sup> When my soul fainted within me I remembered thee, O LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

<sup>8</sup> They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy.

<sup>9</sup> But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.

<sup>10</sup> ¶ And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

*Dear Sarah:*

I've already been married two years, but already I've lost all my own identity. All my mail is addressed in my husband's name, with a "Mrs." in front of it. Whether I go to the vet or charge at a store, they always want my husband's name for their records. I feel robbed! I'm still a person with my own name, personality and femininity, and I want everyone to know it. But how can I make this known to the male-oriented world?

— Ms. Lib.

**Dear Ms. Lib:**

Your cry for female identity is heard throughout the land. First, I would caution you to examine your cry to see if it is not just an echo of the restless womankind of the world who rebel against the role God has given married women. How fast we are caught up in the thoughts and actions of non-Christians!

To help you in your thinking, first remember that you entered into a *new* relationship when you were married. Look at the person you are now, not the person you were, and face up to it. You see a woman who looks the same, has the same personality and the same talents. But now your attitudes and your goals, as well as your name, are changed as you have become one flesh with the one whom God has appointed to be your husband and head (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Read Proverbs 31 again, and be encouraged to see an ambitious, industrious, loving, wise and talented wife, who has lost none of her identity as a person but who, because of her God-pleasing activities and manner, brings honor and respect to her husband. Her happiness is in pleasing her husband, and he feels honored and happy in her. And together as one in the Lord, they are unitedly rich in joy and blessings.

— Sarah.

*Ed. note:* Sarah regrets that she will be unable to enter into personal correspondence. Each month she will select one or two letters that have meaning for the most people, and answer them in this column. Write to Route 2, Box 9, Glenwood, WA 98619; your letter will be forwarded to Sarah.

# Genesis Two:

## Exhort with Patience

JULIE ANN STONE

Through the chaplain, our Women's Missionary Society gives parties at the local Juvenile Hall. Though we aren't allowed to preach or read the Bible (this is the chaplain's department), ordinary witnessing is permitted.

One night two girls and I were discussing things in general when one suddenly said, "I wish I had some 'coke'!" The other girl gasped; everybody knew you didn't say things like that around the church ladies! Since I'm rather dense, it wasn't until the gasp that I realized the girl meant something other than a soft drink. The first girl defended herself, declaring her statement was very true, while the second continued to give her pointers on party manners.

Since that night I've reflected often on that conversation. I know now that "coke" means cocaine. And that isn't the sort of thing usually said to church ladies.

### Suitable for "church ladies"

What can be shared with church ladies? If I announced that I felt like such a failure as a mother, wife or Christian, that I wanted to run away, what would the church ladies say to me? Would they gasp and be shocked? Would they strike me from the Society membership list? Would they exhort me? admonish me? laugh at me? avoid me? tell the pastor? What would you say if I confronted you with such an admission?

The Bible is quite clear on this point. We are to pray, exhort and encourage, listen and still love, and fortify one another. Our pastor says Christians are to "polish" each other by exhorting one another.

To me that means we wear off the rough edges from each other by

honest confession and sincere sharing of the true problems we all have. Our fellow Christian is to point us to the Word of God, to show us things we have been unwilling or unable to see before this time. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy" (Proverbs 27:6).

### Solutions through listening

Have you ever noticed that true listening to another's problems, and careful checking of the Bible's teaching, helps you solve a problem you yourself may have at the moment, or even later on? It seems an answer is stored in your own answer box for reference when needed, or even that your own puzzling problem mysteriously disappears when you involve yourself in trying to find a solution for another's.

In the case of the girl who wanted "coke," I asked her, "Why?" This led the three of us to a deeper level of conversation and opened the way for me to witness. How about you? Would you welcome a chance to rejoice with those who rejoice, or weep with those who weep, or share your life with fellow human beings?

Or are you careful to keep conversations on a superficial plane and ignore any and all hints that the other person would like to open up to you? In so doing you may avoid draining involvements; you also ignore the Bible's command:

"Give daily warning to one another so long as we may speak of today, so that not one of you may be hardened through the delusion of sin. . . . Let us also be mindful to stimulate one another toward love and helpful activities, . . . giving mutual encouragement, and all the more so since you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24, 25, Berkeley Version).

*Mrs. Stone, whose patient and helpful exhorting has appeared before in these pages, is an elect lady from the Garden Grove (Calif.) Orthodox Presbyterian Church.*

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# Twenty - Two

## *So, what's liberation?*

**BARBARA BLIETZ**

One of the most difficult questions confronting the modern Christian woman centers around her submissive role within the church and towards her husband.

It is not my purpose to point out theological problems or modern trends, nor in any way to refute old standards regarding the place of women. Instead, I'd like just to share some personal experiences that seem to reflect our own struggle with this serious question.

### **God's working begun**

We were extremely fortunate, as God showed us very early in our marriage that, unless we found his plan for our lives, our marriage was very apt to fail. Not wanting this to happen, we decided to try to find God together.

Our marriage then took on a different flavor. Life began to be an adventure. (I think, now, that any marriage can begin this adventure simply by setting aside personal views in areas where there is major disagreement, and being ready to look at what God says about them.)

I'm not saying here that life became a bed of roses. Sometimes we felt like quitting and would have many times; but God had begun a work in us (Philippians 1:6). How comforting to know that God never abandons a project!

Still, at one time early in our adventure, I found myself deeply discouraged. We had been studying God's Word and had begun to be involved in our church. Yet I felt that things were lopsided.

Our marriage was beginning to revolve around my church activities. (Mostly this was because I had more daytime hours available.) Being involved was good, but I was beginning to feel that we were on a crowded staircase; we were only steps apart, but

progressively less able to communicate. Our marriage was being squashed by my church activities.

### **God's work strengthened**

So, I began to say no to church activities. I rejected new tasks, vetoed meetings, blackballed the new women's club. Things began to settle down. Finally we accepted just one church job that we felt could be done together.

Something was still wrong. One day when we received some church mail, the problem became obvious. The mail was addressed to me!

We began to have serious doubts about our church role, about how things were structured. Everything

*I've been set free to do what God wanted, and I've discovered that to be free is to set my goals according to God's creative plan.*

seemed backwards! No amount of discussion or encouragement brought relief. I was even advised to tune out my husband's complaints, not to worry, to keep busy at church, because God would work things out.

So, I did. . . . and God did!

Tuning out my husband proved disastrous and, conversely, we began to see that in order to honor God, the husband had to be the head over the wife (Ephesians 5:24).

When we realized the terrible mistake we'd been making, we began to seek out prayerfully a more biblical church. That is when we first encountered an Orthodox Presbyterian Church. We didn't need to look further.

As we began to study afresh our covenant relationship with God, it seemed that our family relationships

began to take on a new and workable perspective. God was carrying on the work he had begun!

### **God's work is liberating**

For a long time we received "flak" and eventually felt the loss of friends as we struggled to do what was biblical.

But now, some three years later, I can safely look to my husband and find the comfort of his being the spiritual head of our home under God.

Instead of putting me in shackles, as modern philosophies suggest, this whole experience has liberated me. I've been set free to do what God wanted, and I've discovered that to be free is to set my goals according to God's creative plan.

People tend to picture the submissive woman as an unproductive, non-involved human being. For me, though, even the most direct biblical examples point towards just the opposite.

The model wife, described in Proverbs 31, bears this out perfectly. Now, there was a woman! Her ability must have been at least the equal of today's Wall Street wizards! The amazing thing about her is that her "outside interests" in no way excluded her husband and family. Instead, her tasks added joy, trust and unity to the family. And with the household in such good order, her husband became a respected and valuable asset to the whole community!

Yet both partners were free, because they could safely trust in the other. They could trust each other because they were both seeking to fulfill God's order for their lives.

I'm not suggesting by all this that I've "arrived." But, in struggling to untangle myself from the false standards that clamor from the various women's liberation movements, I've discovered that true freedom is not in the setting aside of my duties. Rather, through the discovery of what God meant them to be, there has come an unlimited opportunity for expression.

For many modern women, being in subjection has become an official ball-and-chain. For me, thanks to God's working in our lives, it has been the beginning of the stuff that true liberation is all about!

*Mrs. Dwayne Blietz is a member of Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Hanover Park, Illinois.*

# What happens when your church sings?



Do the songs in your hymnbook set people's toes tapping and their hands clapping? Do the words of their favorite hymns send your people off on sentimental journeys among dimly remembered religious experiences? Are the hymns sung in your church doing a great job of stirring emotions without ever really turning the thoughts of your people to the glories of the triune God and the mysteries of his redeeming grace?

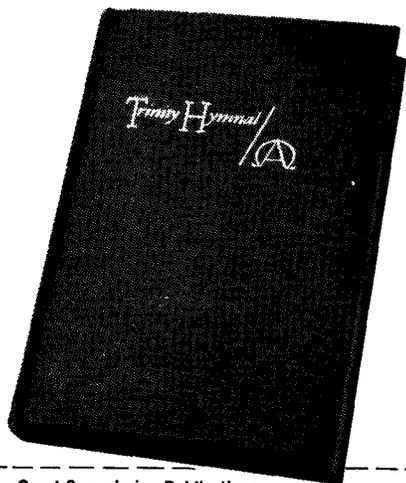
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# WILL YOU TAKE A BABY?

CAROLYN NYSTROM

"The police have a baby. It looks like it's about three months old. We don't know if it's a boy or girl. Can you give it a place to sleep?"

This was our near-midnight call several months ago. The day had been long and wearing. Our three-bedroom house was bulging already with our own two girls, ages 5 and 7, and two toddler foster children. We briefly discussed the situation while our caseworker held the line.

Yes, we would take one more baby. And that's how Timothy first entered our lives. Now that he was coming, I began to think of practical things like baby bottles, the box of baby clothes in the basement, and where *would* he sleep.

Timothy's first bed was makeshift, a closed-off entryway barred by a toddler gate and padded by blankets. I climbed in with him to give him bottles so that the toddlers wouldn't maul us and so I could still hop over the gate if childish disaster struck somewhere.

He was a beautiful baby, tiny, blond, with the even features found in picture books. Yet he was strangely unresponsive because he had been so long in the care of a mother imprisoned in a world of mental illness that kept her staring blankly at a wall for days. After a month of coaxing, Timothy began to smile. A more rewarding smile I've never had.

### Foster children

There are many children like Timothy who need temporary care away from their own home. These foster children are not adoptable when they're placed in a foster home, and they are nearly always returned to their natural parents as soon as the parents can care for them again.

We have been foster parents for the Illinois Department of Children and

Family Services for well over a year. During this time we've made five extra children a part of our family. Some have been with us for long periods; others for only a few months.

Last summer we had two lovely Indian children. Both parents were long-term alcoholics, but their father was making a determined effort at recovery. They were older than our own girls, and we hesitated. Would we know how to cope with an age level we had not yet experienced?

Yet the summer was challenging and rewarding. These children had never before prayed, heard a Bible story, or attended church. My spiritual responsibility to them was almost frightening, but they were eager to learn. Evening quiet times took on new meaning for each of us as we glimpsed God through uninitiated eyes. Their father was ready to care for them by the end of the summer, and I pray that God's Spirit will continue to minister to them.

### A healing ministry

Alisa came just one month later. She was not yet two and a victim of child abuse. She looked deceptively cherubic when asleep, but awake her brows formed an angry frown and her eyes peered beneath them defiantly. At first she was terrified of everyone but gradually she began to try to get even for the injuries she had experienced. She was determined to hurt everyone and everything and trusted no one. Furniture, lamps, pets, children, baby—all experienced her attacks. Many times I reached the end of my own abilities and called in desperation on an almighty God. I had more need to depend on him than ever before.

Randy was our first foster child. He too was a victim of child abuse. He

(Continued on page 148.)

First Presbyterian Church,  
Macon, Georgia  
Host to the Second General Assembly of  
The Presbyterian Church in America  
September 17 - 20, 1974



## Second General Assembly

# The National Presbyterian Church The Presbyterian Church in America

The Second General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church convened at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, September 17, at the First Presbyterian Church of Macon, Georgia. (This church had been the host for two previous assemblies of the Presbyterian Church, U.S. It was also a church in which Dr. J. Gresham Machen frequently worshipped on vacations; his maternal grandfather was its clerk of session for over forty years.)

### State of the Church

The retiring moderator, W. Jack Williamson, a ruling elder from Greenville, Alabama, presided at the opening worship service. He reported that there are 348 congregations officially enrolled, approximately 260 ministers, and perhaps 75,000 members. Some 445 commissioners (215 teaching elders and 230 ruling elders) made up this second assembly. From its original base in the southern states, the NPC has already reached into New England, the Pacific coast states, and even Alaska and Canada.

Only one name was placed in nomination for moderator: the Rev. Erskine L. Jackson, pastor of the First Church of Kosciusko, Miss. He was elected by acclamation and served to the obvious approval of commissioners.

### A rose by any other name

The assembly was faced with a pos-

### WILLIAM H. SMITH

sible lawsuit over its name on the part of the National Presbyterian Church (UPUSA) in Washington, D.C. Though a single congregation, this church does have a nationwide influence and support and felt its situation would be adversely affected by the new denomination's chosen name. Rather than go to court over the name, the General Assembly moved to choose a new name. Out of sixteen names proposed, it finally chose "National Reformed Presbyterian Church" — which name was widely reported in the press.

Overnight, however, strong dissatisfaction with the new name had grown, and even doubt that the new name would escape the legal threat since it still contained the word "National." The assembly agreed to reconsider, and finally chose the name "Presbyterian Church in America." A move to reconsider even this was rejected.

[Note: The present Orthodox Presbyterian Church was originally named

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*We are greatly indebted to the Rev. William H. Smith, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Union, Miss., for this report on his church's general assembly. Comments enclosed in brackets are those of the editor.*

the "Presbyterian Church of America" in 1936. Challenged in court by its parent denomination, the (now United) Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., the infant church lost an initial court decision; rather than continue an expensive legal struggle, it took its present name. However, a recent assembly initiated steps to investigate the possibility of reclaiming its original name. Some legal experts believe this could be done and, if necessary, defended in court successfully.]

### The question of spiritual gifts

At the First General Assembly, held in December 1973, adoption of standards for the new church was a major part of the docket. In considering the Book of Church Order (form of government), that assembly was unable to agree on the traditional wording of Chapter Seven, paragraph 1, which read:

"Under the New Testament, our Lord at first collected his people out of different nations, and united them to the household of faith by the mission of extraordinary officers, endued with miraculous gifts, which have long since ceased." Debate over the final phrase led the assembly to refer the whole question to a special committee. This ad interim committee reported to the second assembly; it recommended that the paragraph be made to read:

"Under the New Testament, our

Lord at first collected his people out of different nations, and united them to the household of faith by the ministry of extraordinary officers who received extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and who were agents by whom God completed His revelation to His church. Such officers and gifts related to new revelation have no successors since God completed His revelation at the conclusion of the Apostolic Age."

This proposed wording was adopted. A "pastoral letter" also proposed by the ad interim committee was accepted by the assembly. It appears elsewhere in this issue of the *Guardian*.

*Comment:* In some respects the new paragraph for the B.C.O. is stronger than the old one. Consistent with Chapter 1 of the Confession of Faith, it makes absolutely clear that revelation has ceased and that those officers and gifts related to the giving of revelation have also ceased.

The sufficiency and finality of Scripture are two of the most important issues facing Reformed Christianity today, both in relation to its confrontation with neo-orthodoxy and in discussion with the broader evangelical world. The new paragraph leaves no

doubt on these two issues. Neopentecostals will find little with which to be happy. The pastoral letter is a constructive one which should prove helpful to the church as a whole.

[For further comment on this matter, see the remarks elsewhere in this issue by Dr. O. Palmer Robertson, who was a member of the ad interim "committee to study the question of spiritual gifts."]

### Theological extension seminaries

The assembly was confronted with different recommendations on the matter of extension seminaries by the Committee on Mission to the U.S. (home missions committee) and the Committee on Christian Education and Publications. The first urged that it be allowed to move ahead with plans for extension seminaries while the latter committee recommended that no definite steps be taken toward establishing such seminaries this year.

A temporary committee was appointed to seek a resolution of the differences. This committee determined that the responsibility for such seminaries was that of the Committee on Christian Education, but recommended

that the assembly charge that committee to formulate plans and programs for extension seminaries in consultation with the MUS Committee. This recommendation was adopted.

Debate on this overall concept focused on the need for ministers in the new denomination and the practical advantages of offering theological training without the normal three or four years of residence at a seminary. Extension seminaries could also provide training for teachers and other church leaders. Objections to the idea centered on the need to maintain high academic standards for ministerial training, particularly in the areas of the biblical languages and Reformed doctrine. Placing responsibility for such extension seminaries under the Christian Education Committee was designed to ensure academic quality.

### Mission to the World

Perhaps the most important issue faced by the assembly was raised in connection with the recommendations of the Committee on Mission to the World (foreign missions committee). The assembly was urged to "authorize the Committee on Mission to the

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## A Pastoral Letter concerning the experience of the Holy Spirit in the church today

The General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church, being fully aware of the widespread notice being given to the question of the work of the Holy Spirit today, offers the following pastoral letter addressed to its churches:

The General Assembly rejoices in all evidences of new life in Christ's body. It prays earnestly that the Spirit which Christ has poured out on his church may continue to affect radically the lives of men throughout the world.

At the same time, the General Assembly would express concern over an increasing emphasis on experience-centered criteria as they are applied to the life of God's people. The General Assembly would encourage the church as a whole to take most seriously its commitment to the Scriptures as the "only infallible rule of faith and practice" (*Book of Church Order*, 22-5), particularly as Scripture relates to current questions within the church.

In seeking to provide guidelines from Scripture to questions relating to the church's experience of the Holy Spirit, the General Assembly would offer the following observations:

### 1. Concerning the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised by Joel and

other prophets in the Old Testament as well as by John the Baptist and our Lord in the New Testament (Joel 2:28, 29; see also Isa. 32:15; 59:21; Ezek. 36:26, 27; 37:14. And, John 7:37-39; see also Matt. 3:11; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-16). It found its fulfillment at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). While public and external manifestations of the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred on occasion in the Apostolic Age (Acts 2:1-4; 8:14-17; 10:44-48; 19:6-7), Scripture teaches that the normal experience of the Spirit's baptism coincides with regeneration (Titus 3:5; see also Acts 2:38; Rom. 5:5; 8:9; 1 Cor. 12-13). It is therefore not to be viewed as a second blessing or a special work of grace enjoyed by some but not by all Christians (1 Cor. 12:3; see also Rom. 8-10; 1 John 4:2). The initial reception of Christ by faith is not to be separated from the total impartation of the Person of the Holy Spirit (John 3:34; see Titus 3:5, 6).

### 2. Concerning Life in the Spirit

Life in the Spirit begins with regeneration (Col. 2:3; see also John 3:3-8; Eph. 2:1-5). The first manifestation of this life is the believer's calling on the name of the Lord for salvation (Rom. 10:13-14; see also Gen. 4:26; Joel 2:32; 1 Cor. 12:3). Assurance of salvation is not based on any experience, but on the Word of God that promises eternal life to all who believe (2 Pet. 1:17-19;

World to establish working relationships with other evangelical missionary agencies which welcome the services and teachings of missionaries holding the Reformed faith and polity . . . ."

In contrast, an overture from Mississippi Valley Presbytery had asked the assembly to "direct its Committee on Mission to the World to use care to see that all missionaries sent by the Assembly's Committee be involved in propagating the Reformed faith, either by working with already established Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, or, if no Reformed church exists in the land to which they are sent, to establish a Reformed witness there."

A move to commit the whole matter for further study was rejected and the first recommendation was adopted. More than forty commissioners recorded their negative votes. As adopted, the recommendation permits implementation during the coming year, but does call for further evaluation at the next assembly.

The assembly also approved the nomination of the Rev. John E. Kyle as Coordinator of the Committee on Mission to the World. Mr. Kyle formerly served with the Wycliffe Bible

Translators, an independent mission agency specializing in Scripture translation work.

*Comment:* Though the reports of both the Christian Education and the MUS committees contained theological statements setting forth the basis and principles of their work, no such statement was contained in the report of the Committee on Mission to the World. The church is in need of a biblical theology of missions, one that will mold and motivate the practice of world missions. One must hope that presbyteries, and the committee, will enter into a thorough study of Scripture and consciously seek to relate the study to the way mission work is to be done.

In the debate on the proposal to work "with other evangelical missionary agencies," Dr. Morton Smith of Reformed Theological Seminary (and the assembly's stated clerk) opposed the proposal and noted the quite different policy of the constituting assembly of "southern" Presbyterian Church in 1861. In an "Address to All Churches" (primarily authored by Dr. J. H. Thornwell) that assembly said:

"The only thing that will be at all

peculiar to us is the manner in which we shall attempt to discharge our duty. In almost every department of labor, except the pastoral care of congregations, it has been usual for the church to resort to societies more or less closely connected with itself, and yet logically and really distinct. It is our purpose to rely on the regular organs of our [church] government, and executive agencies directly and immediately responsible to them. We wish to make the church not merely a superintendent, but an agent. We wish to develop the idea that the congregation of believers, as visibly organized, is the very society or corporation which is divinely called to do the work of the Lord. We shall, therefore, endeavor to do what has never yet been adequately done—bring out the energies of our Presbyterian system of government. From the session to the Assembly, we shall strive to enlist all our courts, as courts, in every department of Christian effort."

[This paragraph from its earlier history the National Presbyterian Church had adopted itself in a "Message to All Churches" from its first general assembly. But the second assembly has rather clearly chosen to depart from

see also Psalm 19:7; John 17:7, 8, 14, 17; 20:31; Eph. 2:8, 9; Heb. 11:6; 1 John 5:13, 18-20). This assurance is to be cultivated by the continual use of the means of grace (Phil. 2:12, 13; see also Acts 2:41, 42; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).

### 3. Concerning the Filling of the Spirit

The filling of the Spirit denotes the dominion of Christ in our lives and occurs when one is led willingly by the Word through which the Spirit works (Gal. 5:25; see also Rom. 8:4, 13, 14; Gal. 3:3; 5:16, 17). By their subjection to the Word of Scripture, believers grow in grace and the benefits of the redemption they receive freely through Christ (2 Tim. 2:15; see also 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The evidence of this spiritual growth is seen in the fruits of the Spirit, which is proof of their abiding in Christ and His Word abiding in them (John 15:4-7; see also Gal. 5:22, 23). By the filling of the Spirit they are enabled to speak the truth of Christ with great boldness (Acts 4:13).

The Scripture commands every Christian to be filled continually by the Holy Spirit, and to grow spiritually by obedience to God's written Word and the proper use of the means of grace (Acts 2:41, 42; see also Matt. 28:18, 19; Eph. 5:18). When we neglect or ignore His Word or are disobedient to it, we are guilty of quenching and grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:25-30; 1 Thess. 5:19-22).

### 4. Concerning the Gifts of the Spirit

Spiritual gifts are granted to every believer by the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each Christian "individually as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:11; Heb. 2:4). Christians are to use these gifts to serve Christ in the work of His kingdom and for the edification of the body of Christ

(1 Cor. 14:26; see also Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:12). All true believers receive some spiritual gift or gifts (1 Cor. 12:7). No spiritual gift is to be despised, nor is it to be misused to bring glory to any other than to Christ (John 16:14; 1 Cor. 10:31; 12:21; 13:1-3; Eph. 1:13-14). Specific spiritual gifts noted in Scripture are found in the following passages: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-16.

Some spiritual gifts plainly have ceased, such as the founding office of the apostle. Others are obscure and cannot be clearly defined, such as "helps." Others are clearly seen today, such as "teaching" and "giving." Some have received undue prominence in recent days, such as "tongues," "working of miracles" and "healing."

#### A. Tongues

It seems evident that the tongues described in Acts 2 were foreign languages known to the hearers then present. It is more difficult, however, to resolve the question of the exact nature of the tongues mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. It is also difficult to determine with certainty the relationship of the modern tongues phenomenon to the New Testament experience. The General Assembly suggests however, that:

1. Any view of the tongues as experienced in our time which conceives of it as an experience by which revelation is received from God is contrary to the finalized character of revelation in Scripture.

2. Any view of tongues which sees this phenomenon as an essential sign of the baptism of the Spirit is contradictory to Scripture; and

this principle of doing mission work in a Presbyterian way in order to gain the supposed advantages of working through existing agencies. Though the proposal adopted insists that the missionaries must be free to propagate the Reformed faith and polity, a requirement that many independent agencies may not be willing to grant, it remains to be seen how well truly Presbyterian mission work can be done under such circumstances.]

### Ruling elders and the sacraments

In adopting the Book of Church Order, the First General Assembly made provision for presbyterial licensing of certain ruling elders for more or less regular preaching. Both historically and by immediate need, ruling elders have regularly filled pulpits particularly in small churches unable to support a pastor. But when this provision was adopted in 1973, the question of having such elders administer the sacraments created considerable debate. The question was referred to an ad interim committee for study. That committee reported to the second assembly, but with a majority and minority recommendation.

The majority report recommended keeping the present wording of the B.C.O. which does not provide for ruling elders' administering the sacraments. The minority urged that it be provided for. The assembly erected a new committee with responsibility to study the question along with others relating to the eldership.

*Comment:* Neither the majority nor the minority had made use of the writings of Dr. Thornwell, despite the fact that he had successfully persuaded the Southern Church to his conviction on the "parity" of ruling and teaching elders.

As Thornwell put it: "To rule well was the duty of all Elders, regarded simply as Elders; to labour in the word and doctrine was to do something more than the Presbyterate [or, eldership] required. . . . The eldership, as such, never includes teaching: this is always a superadded function, and it is not in consequence of his presbyterial authority that an Elder preaches. . . . [The preacher] differed from his brethren in nothing but the authority to preach and administer the sacraments; the dispensation of the sacraments being, in fact, only a symbolical

method of preaching, and, therefore, are the exclusive function of the Preacher's office" (from *Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, pp. 118-120).

Though Thornwell is surely not the final authority on such questions, it does seem that his views need to be studied by those who claim to follow in his steps and insist on the "parity" of the elders. The new church has already emphasized anew the role of the ruling elder, an emphasis welcomed by nearly everyone. But it is to be hoped that this new study committee will investigate thoroughly the writings of Dr. Thornwell in this crucial area of church life and polity.

### Joint venture in Christian education

A decision, taken in closing hours of the assembly but without dissent from the commissioners still present, may turn out to be one of the most significant acts of the young church. The Committee on Christian Education had considered an offer from the Orthodox Presbyterians' Great Commission Publications to set up a joint operation funded and controlled by both denominations. The joint venture

3. Any practice of the tongues phenomenon in any age which causes dissension and division within the body of Christ or diverts the church from its mission is contrary to the purpose of the Spirit's gifts.

### B. Miracles

Much discussion and debate continue throughout the church of Christ on the subject of miracles. In the Scripture certain clusters of miracles were associated with various servants of God and related to the giving of revelation, such as, Exodus 4:1-9; 1 Kings 17:23-24; John 2:11; 3:2. Such miracles were signs by which God communicated divine truth or confirmed that the speaker indeed spoke from God. These miracles related to revelation have ceased, since revelation was completed with the closing of the Canon in the New Testament era.

Scripture also uses the term "miracle" or wonder to describe the acts of God in all areas of creation and providence (Psalm 107:23, 24; see also Psalm 139:14). The power of God in response to believing prayer to work wonders and to heal the sick cannot be limited (James 4:14-16). Such wonders certainly do continue to this day and are all for the glory of God not man.

Finally, the General Assembly would speak a word of caution against an obsession with signs and miraculous manifestations which is not indicative of a healthy church, but of the opposite (Matt. 12:39; see also Matt. 24:24; John 4:48; 1 Cor. 1:22, 23; 14:22; 2 Thess. 2:9-12). The Spirit provides all that is necessary for the equipping of the saints through His presence and power in the lives of the regenerate (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; see also Luke 16:31;

John 14:16, 17; 16:7-16; 1 Cor. 12:1-11; 13:1-14:1; Gal. 5:22-23). The true basis of faith and spiritual growth is the work of the Holy Spirit in believers as they are made subject to His written Word, which is sufficient in itself for spiritual growth to complete maturity (Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:16-21).

The General Assembly would also urge a spirit of forbearance among those holding differing views regarding the spiritual gifts as they are experienced today (Rom. 14:10-13).

As the church continues to study these matters, the General Assembly would recommend:

1. Prayerful study of the Scriptural teaching on the Holy Spirit and His gifts;
2. Study of the church's Standards on such areas as Scripture, Trinity, Doctrines of Grace;
3. Careful training, examination and selection of officers and others in the place of teaching and leadership in the church to assure a consistency of commitment to Scripture and the Reformed faith and to the health and unity of the church;
4. Preaching and teaching of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit and His work as taught in Scripture and the Standards of the church; and
5. The promotion of a charitable spirit in the whole church.

—Adopted by the Second General Assembly of the National Presbyterian Church, now the Presbyterian Church in America, meeting in Macon, Georgia, September 17-20.

would initially concentrate on producing Sunday school materials, and such other Christian literature as might be developed.

In clarifying some of the conditions, it became clear that the joint venture would be as expensive as each church

felt it could afford, that joint operations could be begun on whatever limits were mutually agreeable. With that understanding, the assembly readily approved an initial investment of \$50,000 in a joint operation of Great Commission Publications.

## The "spiritual gifts" issue

O. PALMER ROBERTSON

One matter of business which received early attention by the Second General Assembly of the now-named Presbyterian Church in America was the report of the Ad Interim Committee to Study the Question of Spiritual Gifts.

Having been given excessive press treatment in advance, this matter was anticipated as being the greatest problem facing the assembly. However, the report was received with a minimum of disagreement.

### Emphasis on finality of revelation

A major factor of the report was its repeated reference to the completeness of revelation as it is found in Scripture. Chapter 7-(1) of the Book of Church Order, as adopted by this assembly, now reinforces the statement of Chapter 1 of the Westminster Confession concerning the finality of God's revelational activity during the age of the apostles.

While there was concern on the part of some commissioners that the assembly did not spell out specifically its conviction that the tongues phenomena of the present day is *not* the same as the tongues of the New Testament times, adequate safeguards against an influx of modern-day charismatics seems to be inherent in the adopted statement. Since tongues as experienced in New Testament times was a revelational gift (God's Spirit making a man's mouth move in syllables that could be interpreted), and since the church has affirmed the finality of revelation in Scripture, it may be hoped that the church will move from this point toward a consistent position on the charismatic question.

### Maintaining the rights of presbytery

In any case, the right of presbyteries to evaluate their own membership is maintained, and the presbytery must

determine if the peace and purity of the church may be at stake in any particular situation.

The pastoral letter addressed to the churches of the denomination also contains significant features and should help presbyteries in their tasks. The letter affirms that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a point in history which found its fulfillment at Pentecost. It is an event in God's redemptive history, not a recurring experience for every succeeding generation.

The letter also insists that the reception of the Spirit by the individual believer coincides with the work of regeneration. "The initial reception of Christ by faith is not to be separated from the total impartation of the Person of the Holy Spirit." The report defines the giving of the Spirit in terms of submission to the Word of Scripture, as over against a "second blessing" that occurs later in the life of some believers.

### Prayer in an "unknown tongue"?

The only effort to amend the report was a proposal to add an amendment to remind the church that the Confession says prayer offered in the worship of God's people must be "in a known tongue" (XXI, 3). While the amendment was defeated on the grounds that the Westminster divines were referring to the Romish practice of using Latin in worship, it is doubtful that this is good reasoning. The Scripture proof cited by the Confession refers to 1 Corinthians 14:14, the very passage where Paul himself advocates praying in the worshipping assembly in an understandable tongue as over against praying in unknown tongues!

*Dr. Robertson, a professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary, was a member of the ad interim committee that studied the question of spiritual gifts.*

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# Books in Review

*There Is a New World Coming*, by Hal Lindsey; Vision House Publishers, Santa Ana, Calif. 308 pages.

Reviewed by the Rev. Edwards E. Elliott, pastor of the Garden Grove (Calif.) Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Putting key to ribbon to write a book may be like David putting on Saul's armor — the subject may be too large for the would-be author. This is certainly so in the case of this attempted commentary on the book of Revelation.

The books authored by Hal Lindsey have enjoyed a popular sale. But the reckoning date is built right into them. The author dates the Rapture within this generation. In this book he avoids the precision of his previous volume, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, in naming 1988 as the approximate date of the Second Coming, minus seven years (back to 1981) as the date of the Rapture of the church. But he still stands by this earlier publication without apology or retraction.

The blessing at the beginning of Revelation for the reader, and the curse at the end for the tamperer, are acknowledged by Lindsey; he even says that avoidance of its study involves a "terrible risk." Yet he himself tampers with the text, adding unauthorized words to make Rev. 11:3 read: "*But before this I will give power to My two witnesses. . . .*"

There is another way to destroy a text, and that is to destroy its relevance. Lindsey would deprive the church of the relevance of most of Revelation: "Starting with this chapter [four] the church isn't seen on earth again until Chapter 19." This removes a rather large portion of the book from any real concern of ours.

And there is the heady expression of a virtuoso in these words: "Far from being deeply mysterious, Revelation is actually one of the easiest of all Bible books to understand once we understand its symbols." But his explanation of the symbols leaves his readers limp with excitement and sleepless with apprehension.

For example: The wings of an eagle given to the woman in Revelation 12 are kindness of the U.S. Air Force. The locusts are Cobra helicopters, and the sting in their tail is a

stream of nerve gas. Lindsey believes that the events of the sixth seal describe "an earthquake set off by a nuclear explosion." And even though the Euphrates is dry, a Russian-built dam can still provide water for the army of 200,000,000 Red Chinese in their advance across all Asia to attack the army of the Antichrist. These are quite typical instances of the author's "explanation" of the symbols.

Lindsey hardly conceals his hope that a timely earthquake will demolish the Mosque of Omar, the Dome of the Rock, to make way for the rebuilding of the third temple in Jerusalem. The underground archeological diggings fascinate him: "Imagine my emotions as I stood under a sign at the Wall which read in Hebrew: 'Holy of Holies, 10 Meters'. . . ."

And yet, though he would hold that this is the restored temple that John speaks of measuring in Rev. 11:1, Lindsey adds: "Unfortunately, it turns out to be an apostate place of worship." This is a clear example of wresting a Scripture to fit a theory. But the author would go beyond this and boldly asserts that when Revelation speaks of the Ark of the Covenant in heaven, it means just that; in other words, there is another temple, complete with Old Testament furniture, in heaven. And he would have Christ functioning in such a carnal though "heavenly" structure. Only later in the New Jerusalem, which Lindsey flippantly refers to as "New J," is the Lamb the only temple.

For Lindsey, what Paul speaks of as "the last trump" is really only the *first* trump. "For example, a trumpet will sound when Christ comes in the air to call forth His own people. Seven trumpets will sound during some of the great judgments of the seven-year tribulation which will be unleashed upon this earth. Then there's the great trumpet which will sound at Christ's final return to earth."

The beast and the false prophet comprise *two* Antichrists, one European

and the other Jewish. As to the former he says, "I personally believe that this man is alive somewhere in the world at this very moment!" (Did he perhaps find this bit of information in the writings of that crystal-gazer, Jeanne Dixon?) He of course would argue that if this is the generation that will see the signs, it will surely produce the Man of Sin.

Again and again, Lindsey holds out the hope of a chance at salvation after the Rapture. "On many occasions I have spoken to Jewish acquaintances about accepting Jesus as their Savior; when they don't wish to, I tell them about the Rapture, urging them to reconsider their decision when this event happens." This sort of evangelism can be lethal in its effect!

And the denial of the present kingship of Christ is, of course, a standard Dispensational practice: "This reign is still in the future. . . ."

There are technical flaws that make a wise man wince and a scholar scowl. The goat of the Day of Atonement becomes a lamb. Instead of Athanasius against the world, he has Antipas. And he confidently asserts, "As you review the history of Rome you will recall it was never conquered by anyone . . .!"

In the final New World, beyond the millennium, Lindsey posits no less than *three* elect bodies of people — Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, and Millennial saints.

The extremes of sensationalism may be disclaimed by others who share the Pre-tribulation Rapture theory. But the theory lends itself to such fantasy. Fascination with an Antichrist that Lindsey says the church will never meet, with plagues the Christian will never feel, can be a waste of time, a drug that prevents a proper focus on our Lord's return. Are these plagues entirely in the future? That God will add just these plagues to the man who tampers with Revelation may well indicate that the relevance of this warning is not to be postponed until after the Rapture.

Sidney Watson's books wore the clothes of the Victorian Age. Lindsey provides the new clothes of the present. But no matter how you dress the Pre-tribulation Rapture theory, it cannot be made valid.

# The Changing Scene

HENRY W. CORAY

## Circus style witnessing

Sometimes you come across a monograph that develops a theme much better than you can. Here in Edwin O'Connor's fine novel, *The Edge of Sadness*, is a passage that illustrates what I mean. It is the view of a Catholic priest who turns a jaundiced eye on a fellow-clergyman known as "the Whistling Priest."

"I've always disliked and distrusted this carnival shrill approach to the Church—and yet heaven knows we see it often enough. Does it really work? I don't think so, but more than that I think it's all wrong. Because for one thing it's unworthy. I don't mean by this it's too informal, too much in the market place, too 'popular'. I do mean, quite simply, that it's cheap. The gaudy, the meretricious, frequently have an immediate seductiveness. . . . I know priests, for example, who will point with great pride to statistics proving the value of such appeals. So many appeals, so many souls for God. Q.E.D. Of course what the statistics don't do so well is to measure the depth, the strength, and the duration of the faith of those who do so come in—or in other words, they tell you absolutely nothing about the only thing that counts. And—still more—while there are all sorts of statistics to tell you how many souls these tactics have brought in, there are no statistics at all to tell you how many they have kept out. Who knows, for instance, who can even guess the numbers of those who, with every sympathy, with every good will, have tentatively approached the Church only to be repelled by vaudeville antics at their first point of contact?" (pages 304, 305).

In Protestant as well as Catholic circles various flamboyant methods are commonly practiced. Some time check the religious page of the Saturday paper for a rundown on tomorrow's pulpit billings!

All this poses pointed questions. When did the Pearl of Great Price ever need garnishing? Where in the New Testament did the apostles rely on sensational gimmicks to attract people to the hearing of the Word? Was Bunyan wrong when he wrote, "I could have used a more adorned style, but I dared not"? If Paul purposed to preach the gospel "not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect," what would he think of our modern three-ring circus strategy that cries out to a perishing public: "Come thou with us and we will do thee good"?

I understand that when Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones began his ministry at the Westminster Chapel in London, he had not yet attained the name he has since acquired as a great expository preacher. He succeeded the late G. Campbell Morgan, who had been drawing large crowds to the church. After Dr. Morgan's passing, the Sabbath evening congregation dropped off. Some of the elders became quite uneasy. At a meeting of the Session one evening they brought up the matter. Dr. Lloyd-Jones had a ready answer: "Brethren, if it's crowds you want I promise you I will pack our chapel this Sunday evening."

"How will you do that?" one of them asked.

"Very simple," answered the wise doctor. "I'll advertise in the London papers that I will appear in the pulpit in a bathing suit."

The subject was promptly abandoned.

## Right and wrong use of prayer

There is a right and a wrong use of the holy practice of prayer. Alas, frequently in corporate meetings of the church the wrong use is employed. Sometimes the intercessor preaches instead of prays: "Help our minister to be more direct in his messages." "Let our elders be more humble."

At other times you may listen to progress reports: "Thou knowest that thy servant is weary because he got up at dawn to prayer, and has been active trying to win souls, and witnessed to that young man who pumps gas at the service station, but he wouldn't listen to me . . ."

Then there is the good soul who turns the prayer room into a kind of information booth: "Bless that dear young couple who are getting on the plane about now, and will be arriving in Seattle tomorrow morning, and boarding ship for Tokyo, and will be on the high seas for over three weeks before they reach their destination . . ."

All of which is reminiscent of an incident that occurred at the chapel service of Princeton University when Dr. James McCosh was president of that institution. McCosh was closing the service with prayer. Suddenly he remembered that he should have made an important announcement. He knew that as soon as he pronounced the "Amen," his captive audience would be half-way out of the sanctuary. With great presence of mind he implored the blessing of heaven on "the senior German class, which," he said, "meets this morning at eleven o'clock instead of ten."

The Shorter Catechism beautifully defines prayer as the "offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." This is the proper use of prayer, certainly. May God enable us so to pray.

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## The Fleshpots of Egypt

I know a man who left Texas

Where he had lived for many years,  
And moved to the great New York.

He wrote one day,

After being there some time,  
To a friend back in the old home town:

"What a wicked city this is!

Much worse than Sodom and Gomorrah.

"I surely wish I had come here

Before I got converted."

— *The Old Chinese Philosopher*

## WILL YOU TAKE A BABY ?

(Continued from page 140.)

had several nutritional diseases and multiple fractures. He was only three months old. Fervently, I prayed that he would grow well and strong and be able to run and play like other children. He gained a pound every week for the first month he was with us. Gradually his bones healed. I nursed him through many illnesses, but today he is an active toddler. I no longer pray for his running ability; I only pray that I can run fast enough to keep up.

### A shared ministry

One of the many benefits of being foster parents is the way it has enriched our relationships within our church. We have been a part of Bethel Church in Wheaton for twelve years; but in the last months we have experienced more fellowship, support, and sharing of burdens than ever before.

Each foster child has an extra "foster family" in the church. These families take the children for visits, pray for them, take them on excursions, even keep them for a week so that we can have a vacation break. It's comforting to know that when a special problem arises with a child I can call their

"other family" and have an immediate partner in prayer. Baby equipment, toys, and clothing have been loaned and given to us. Frequently we are asked how one or another is doing and we know the prayer and concern behind the query. One Bible study group consistently prayed for Alisa all year. Several other church families have decided to join us in taking foster children into their homes.

I only wish there were believing homes for all the children about whom we have been called, for the needs are endless. Some of these come to mind:

a five-year-old boy who needed a father image

a five-year-old girl who had to be taken three times weekly for treatment of cerebral palsy

a newborn girl who needed special feeding because of a cleft palate

an eighteen-year-old boy who needed a place until he finished high school

a thirteen-year-old girl whose mother had beaten her

another thirteen-year-old girl who was told to leave home and never come back; she spent the first night in jail because there was no home for her

a family of seven children, all malnourished and needing medical care.

God has used my experiences as a foster parent to teach me much I never

could have learned otherwise. I've become deeply aware of the problems of the non-affluent and non-Christian world. I can no longer hide myself away in the suburbs when I see the products of this other world on my doorstep.

God has also taught me about children, their resilience and their vulnerability. He has taught me about myself, helped me discover hidden abilities I never thought I had, brought me to recognize my limitations. God has taught me about himself—that I can depend on him, that he hears and answers prayer, that he loves little children, and that I can best teach his love to them by giving them my own love.

Perhaps Christians, more than others, are equipped to take foster children into their homes, to love them and teach them of Christ, and when it's time to release them, to trust God to protect them and continue the work that he had begun in their lives. If you are interested in sharing in this service, contact your local state child welfare agency.

*Mrs. Nystrom is a member of Bethel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, Illinois. We appreciate her sharing with us a glimpse into this much needed ministry of loving service.*

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. John J. Mitchell, editor.

### P.C.A. COMMITTEE MEETS AT WESTMINSTER

The Committee on Mission to the U.S. (home mission agency for the now-named Presbyterian Church in America) recently held its regular meeting on the campus of Westminster Seminary. The PCA is faced with a shortage of pastors, having received many congregations without their former pastors and needing to organize groups in many areas where no congregation pulled out of the parent Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Many Westminster students are showing interest in serving the new church.

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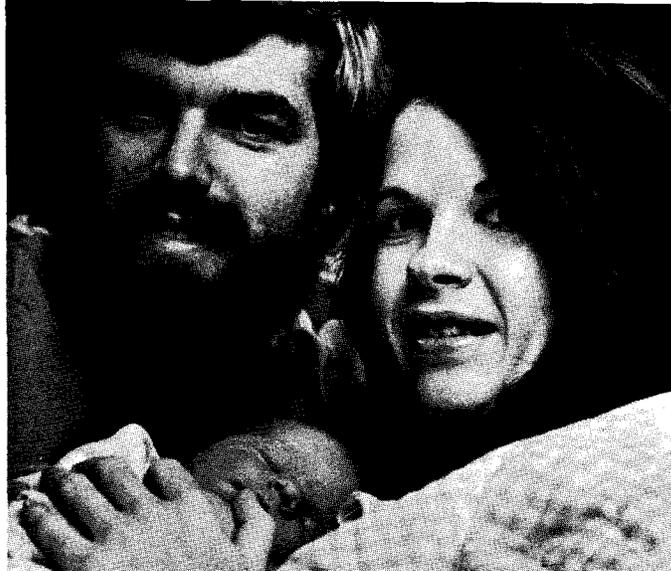
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## "THE LORD IS SALVATION"

**Philadelphia, Pa.**—He arrived on October 16, a healthy 8 lbs., 14 oz., to Karl and Deborah Dortzbach. They named him Joshua, reflecting their faith that the Lord is salvation indeed. Last May 27, Debbie was seized at the mission hospital in Ghinda, Ethiopia, by members of the Eritrean Liberation Front; another captured nurse, Anna Strikwerda, was killed by the rebels. Debbie was held for twenty-six days, treated well, and finally released in spite of the fact that no ransom was paid. She and her husband Karl were serving as missionary interns at the time. Since returning home, Karl is completing studies at Westminster Seminary. The Dortzbachs are considering a return to Ethiopia as missionaries.



Associated Press Photo

## Here & There

**Omaha, Neb.**—The Rev. Ransom L. Webster, Jr., former RPCES pastor in Williamstown, N.J., has accepted the call of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church here. He was received by the O. P. Presbytery of the Dakotas at its September 24-26 meeting. His address: 1330 S. 31st St., Omaha, NE 68105.

**Denver, Colo.**—Mr. Huibert J. Vandenbroek, having been licensed by the Presbytery of the Dakotas, accepted the call of the Park Hill O. P. Church to be its associate pastor for labor with the Aurora Chapel. His address: 3411 Albion St., Denver, CO 80207.

**Gladstone, Ore.**—Dr. Samuel van Houte, former faculty member at Dordt College, was installed as pastor of Calvary O. P. Chapel here on October 27. His address is 16545 S.E. Webster Rd., Milwaukie, OR 97222.

**Silver Spring, Md.**—Knox Church was blessed by a series of messages on "The Historic Christian Faith and a Nation in Crisis," presented by Dr. Joel Nederhood, radio minister of The Back-to-God Hour, October 3-6.

**San Jose, Calif.**—The Rev. William E. Warren, former pastor of Westminster O. P. Church in Valdosta, Ga., has accepted the call of Covenant O. P. Church here to be its pastor. His address: 684 N. Harrison St., Campbell, CA 95008.

**Beaver Falls, Pa.**—The (OPC) Presbytery of Ohio and the (RPCES) Pittsburgh Presbytery met on October 5 for 'get acquainted' discussions covering what it means to be 'thoroughly Reformed,' OPC membership in the RES, dispensationalism, gifts of the Spirit today, 'Christian liberty,' and church discipline. A good spirit was noted. Other presbyteries plan similar joint meetings.

**Menomonee Falls, Wisc.**—The Rev. Cornelius Tolsma, former pastor of Bethel O. P. Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., has accepted the call of Falls Church here. His address: N86-W 17295 Joss Pl., Menomonee Falls, WI 53051.

**Rockville, Md.**—It began as a witness to young people in a local park; it's now an organized congregation with 18 communicants and 13 covenant children. The Rev. Jim West serves as pastor of the new Rockville O. P. Church.

**Beirut, Lebanon**—The Rev. W. Benson Male has arrived here to begin a new mission work for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in this strategic gateway into the whole Middle East. Already he has made contacts with two Armenian Catholics and a Sudanese pastor. His address: P. O. Box 9481, Beirut, Lebanon.

**Vineland, N.J.**—A Christian College Clinic, sponsored by the local Pastors' Prayer Fellowship, was held at Covenant O. P. Church on October 21. Sixteen colleges had displays or representatives present.

**Glenwood, Wash.**—The Rev. John Davies, though retired, has accepted the call of First O. P. Church, Portland, Ore., to serve as associate pastor for Pioneer Community Chapel here. His address: P. O. Box 109, Glenwood, WA 98619.

**Cedar Grove, Wisc.**—The Women's Presbyterial of the Midwest met on September 17 with 190 women present to celebrate its 25th anniversary in a day of sharing in love, fellowship, ideas, and literature. Presbyterial rejoiced in being able to give \$1100 (instead of a projected \$750) to the Libertyville (Ill.) Chapel. Mrs. Oscar Holkeboer recalled God's faithfulness to his church over the years. Mrs. Clarence Roskamp was soloist, as she had been at the first meeting 25 years before. The Rev. George Haney spoke on "The Christian Woman and Her Witness before the World."

**Middletown, Pa.**—Fairvan C. Lenker, long-time clerk of session for Calvary O. P. Church, died of cancer on October 7 at age 56. Mr. Lenker was also active in the Middletown Christian School. He will be missed even as we rejoice in his release from pain and joy in the Lord.

### REPORT ON DORDT COLLEGE

**Winner, S.D.**—A special committee of the (O.P.) Presbytery of the Dakotas has reported that it found at Dordt College no 'heretical statements or positions held by faculty members.' Concern over views published by the AACS and membership in the AACS by some Dordt professors led to the departure of some faculty members last spring. The committee noted that no charges of heresy were brought against any Dordt teachers by those who were protesting AACS influence and views. The report also noted that Dordt's administration was alert to possible problems and set to deal with them.

## The Christian and Guidance

# Practical Suggestions

People are seeking guidance today. Many of us are asking, What does God want me to do? Should I marry this person or another? Should I go into business or further my education? How do I make decisions that could affect the rest of my life?

We have seen that the triune God is the Christian's sovereign guide. And God does offer guidance to those of us who are perplexed in our daily choices. Yet so often we feel insecure and desire to have someone else help us make up our minds. But that someone else must be our loving heavenly Father, who says, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you" (Psalm 32:8).

### Willing for God's will

The Bible teaches that, if you truly want to know the right way to go, you must be willing to do it when you learn it. Our Lord says in John 7:17, "If any man is willing to do [the Father's] will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself." Jesus was speaking here of the rejection of his teaching by the Jews; but he is also assuring us that knowing the will of God involves very much our being willing to obey it.

You may say that you've always wanted to do God's will. Don't kid yourself. We may be sinners saved by grace; but the residue of sin remains embedded in our souls. We must constantly ask our sovereign God to overrule our sinful wills and to help us "to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

After Paul's conversion, his first question was "Lord, what shall I do?" (Acts 22:10). I love the words of Spurgeon: "We generally make the worst blunders about things that are

### WILLIAM H. BELL, JR.

perfectly easy, when the thing is so plain that we do not ask God to guide us, because we think our own common sense will be sufficient, and so we commit grave errors; but in the difficulties, the extreme difficulties, which we take before God, He gives young men prudence, and teaches youths knowledge and discretion. Dependence upon God is the fountain of success" (p. 183, *An All Round Ministry*).

The young Christian should always seek the counsel of godly adults when faced with making these basic decisions. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice" (Proverbs 12:15). Paul and Barnabas went to Antioch because "it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them . . ." (Acts 15:22). This is not to say that we must accept the advice of older or

**If you truly want to know the right way to go, you must be willing to do it when you learn it.**

godlier Christians; but it is a biblical principle that wisdom can be found in godly advisers.

Calvin had planned to go from Paris to Strasbourg. But detoured through Geneva by military operations, he intended to spend only one night. The red-bearded Farel begged Calvin to stay; Calvin refused. Then Farel roared, "You are simply following your own wishes and I declare in the name of almighty God that if you refuse to take part in the Lord's task in this church, God will curse the quiet life you want for your studies." Calvin was amazed; later he wrote, "I felt as if God from heaven had laid His mighty hand upon me to stop me

from my course. . . . I did not continue my journey."

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Psalm 37:23). And the counsel of the godly saint can be of great help, but only because "the law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (verse 31).

### Facing lifetime choices

Should I serve God in my native land or abroad? Which profession should I pursue? Which job in that profession should I take? Should I continue where I am or look elsewhere?

It should be obvious that this sort of question cannot be answered by a direct application of Scripture teaching. At the same time, Scripture does provide basic principles, and we should narrow the choices within Scripture's limits. No Bible verse told me to marry my wife, go to a certain seminary, or seek ordination; but the Scripture did provide the guidelines for making those decisions.

This means we need to use our "sanctified common sense," praying for wisdom to know Scripture principles and wisdom in applying them. Vocational interests, aptitudes, and ability tests should be considered. A competent vocational counselor should be consulted. These are God-given resources to help us know ourselves, as Paul urges in Romans 12:3. Seek the counsel of godly friends who know you and have seen you function in different capacities. If you faint whenever you see blood, I doubt if God would have you be a doctor or nurse on the mission field!

### Not knowing the Scriptures

I am convinced that one of the main reasons Christians fail to obtain God's guidance is simply that we do not know our Bibles thoroughly. If God the Spirit is your guide, and if you

truly desire his guidance, then it stands to reason that you must know his Word.

For he is the Spirit of truth who guides his people into all truth (John 16:13). If we do not know our Bibles well, we have no right to expect special guidance from God to make up for our laziness. The reason some Christians think the Scriptures give insufficient guidance is often simply because they are like the Sadducees who "do err not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29).

"I felt led" can be a real coverup for failure to pray and study an issue through to a difficult decision. I get a little nervous when people say, "God led me" to do this or that. They have received these vibrations, and it all sounds very spiritual, doesn't it? After all, if it turns out we made a mistake, we can always blame our Guide.

Such a misguided Christian is really saying, "Don't hold me responsible!" But it should be obvious that such guidance is not from God, but arises from within the individual self. Such people may feel they are "in the center of God's will," which again sounds very spiritual. But the "center of God's will" is clearly given in Scripture, and God the Spirit is present to illuminate that Word to our needs.

Failure to discern God's will often comes from an unwillingness to admit the deceitfulness of our hearts (Jeremiah 17:9). Rather, it should be: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; . . . and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23, 24).

### **Making basic decisions**

Paradoxically, we often make the most far-reaching decisions in our youth when we have the least experience in making decisions. The choice of vocation and marriage partner are decided in large measure when we are young.

Sometimes trial-and-error is needed to determine our abilities. I learned in this way not to try to preach without notes! Something of the same sort takes place in dating and courtship. Knowing and understanding the opposite sex (to a certain degree!) is a necessity as one prepares to choose a mate. A couple must get to know one another, and sometimes to discover their interests do not mesh. But here too, through prayer and counsel with godly friends, and searching the Scripture, the Spirit can give us inward peace in the decision made.

Again, it is often not a question of special guidance but simply of obedience to God's Word. If you're thinking of marrying a non-Christian, don't ask God for guidance; he's already told you what to do about this (2 Corinthians 6:14). To marry other than "in the Lord" is sin.

How I wish young people would heed Paul's admonition: "Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue after righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). This refers not just to "bosom buddies" with whom we associate; it surely refers also to our life's partner.

### **The little choices**

But perhaps you say, "I'm already married. I have a good job, and fine Christian children. What about the small everyday decisions I must make? Should I go to the movies? join a bridge club? How should I spend my spare time?"

Philippians 4:8 has been a great help to me: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things." Surely that covers a multitude of those day-by-day choices!

In the 1860s, Robert Murray McCheyne was speaking at an ordination: "Mr. Edwards, . . . do not forget the inner man, the heart. The cavalry officer knows that his life depends upon his saber, so he keeps it clean. Every stain he wipes off with the greatest care. Mr. Edwards, you are God's chosen instrument. According to your purity, so shall be your success. It is not great talent; it is not great ideas that God uses; it is great likeness to Jesus Christ. Mr. Edwards, a holy man is an awesome weapon in the hand of God" (in *God's Will Is Not Lost*, by John MacArthur, Jr.). Every Christian is called of God to be holy, sanctified (Romans 8:29). Every decision should be made in the light of that calling.

### **God's leading in our lives**

God does lead us, as a tender shepherd. He restores us; he forgives our errors and sins. Again and again the psalmist reassures us that, though we falter in our following of God's commands, yet our Lord will lift us up: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget

**If we do not know our Bibles well, we have no right to expect special guidance from God to make up for our laziness.**

thy commandments" (Psalm 119:176).

God is sovereign. He is the master of all events. He works out good for those who love him, even in their stumbling service. In an age that seems to have gone mad, when trust appears to have been blown away by the deceits of ungodly men; we need a firm guide. Sink your roots into the soil of God's marvelous power and caring love. He will work all things for the good of his people and his own glory. He is able even to bring good from our mistakes! (Joel 2:25-27).

At best we "know in part" and "see through a glass darkly." We sin, make mistakes in judgment, and will continue to do so until we arrive at our heavenly home. What we do have is the guarantee that our Sovereign Guide does *not* make mistakes, even in allowing us to make them! We can be confident that, as we make the decisions of life, with prayerful dependence on him, with study and memorizing of the Word, God will guide us, shepherding us into the paths of righteousness for his great Name's sake.

We're so curious about the future of our lives. So often we would be the engineer of our lives instead of submitting to our Sovereign. The real question remains: "Just how willing am I to pursue the path of righteousness?"

The Christian's goal in life is to "glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." And the rule God has given to direct us to our goal is his Word in the Scriptures. And the power that will enable us to accomplish that goal is the sovereign Spirit speaking through the Word and working in our hearts.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Soli Deo Gloria!

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*We are most grateful to Mr. Bell for the time, thought, and effort he has put into this series of articles on guidance for the Christian. We trust you will be strengthened through your reading of them as we have been in preparing them for publication.*

# Cease without praying?

**ROBERT G. VALENTINE**



the harvest promised.

The more my mind wandered, the more applications I saw. Whenever we do *not* pray without ceasing, we are in danger of ceasing without praying. A heart not full of prayer is a heart filled with care. We can carry just so much of this world's cares before we break down. We must learn to cast all our care on him who cares for us.

### Leaning on the Lord

Here in Greeneville, Tennessee, we had taken up a work with only six people. We promised to "make tents" as needs be, convinced God wanted us here. Time passed, and the original six have all gone. But we are still here, still convinced the Lord would have us here.

Many have advised us to take our time, training and gifts to a larger field. But the more we prayed the more convinced we were that the Lord would yet give the increase. That might take a long time; we might not



"We should always cease without praying." A smile flitted across my face as I laughed inwardly at the mistake the teacher had made. Of course, he meant to quote 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing."

The teacher went on, innocently unaware of his interchange of words. But his unnoticed mistake afforded a side-track for my thoughts. I began to wonder if there wasn't more truth in what he said than was apparent at first.

### Throwing in the sponge

"Isn't it true," I thought to myself, "how often we do just that. Things grow a little tough, we get discouraged. Instead of being driven to the Lord by the worsening circumstances, we simply give up. We cease without praying it through."

We can glibly quote Galatians 6:9, "Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." But when our initial efforts do not meet with success, we promptly faint. We do not persevere and claim

even see it; our work might be the watering while someone else would do the reaping.

Of one thing we were certain. It was no mistake on God's part to have brought this small church to birth. Too many things had happened to confirm this thought. Property had been secured, both a manse and church building. Our needs and the church's had always been met. The Lord had watched over us all.

When encouragement was needed, it had come. One Sunday my wife was sick and the two teen-agers we usually picked up called to say they couldn't come. That left only my father to preach to. Once I had decided that if no one, besides my wife and father, had come by church time we would go home. Ten minutes before the hour, a car drove in and here were two people I had been working on for four years. I felt the Lord had sent dew on the fleece.

### Grace for ceaseless praying

Suppose I had ceased without praying. These two would never have been reached. Another lady would never have come to experience God's sovereign grace, at least not in our church. And others who have come since, what about them? What of the unknown number who listen to our radio program "Truth for Life"?

These and similar thoughts pressed in upon me as the teacher went on with the lesson. How thankful I was that God had given grace to pray without ceasing, not leaving me to cease without praying.

The teacher was concluding the lesson with a statement about how God answers prayer. Yes, praise God, he does; and by his matchless grace we had been enabled to persevere in prayer instead of ceasing without praying.

*Mr. Valentine is the pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Greeneville, Tennessee. May his example encourage us all to faithful prayer, for our own needs, and for the burdens of one another.*