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A religious Band-Aid

I read with interest Michael R. Smith’s article on “Released Time” (September). Mr. Smith is correct that released time (off-the-public-school-premises religious instruction during school hours) has been held constitutional by the Supreme Court. Mr. Smith is also correct in stating that released time has been of some help to some children in gaining religious formation.

But, across the board, released time, at best, is but a religious Band-Aid. The secularism of the average public school is pervasive. A small amount of rationed off-the-premises religion will not suffice to counter the saturating paganism of the daily environment. Sex, dress—yes, and drugs—along with a secularist curriculum, create an environment that is extremely inculcating.

More to the point, in the September issue, is the article by Tim and Beverly LaHaye, “Can You Afford Christian Schooling?” That says it all.

William B. Ball, Attorney
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Wielding fiery darts

After reading the responses to the articles concerning the Southern Baptists I have figured out why I left the independent Baptist camp. Even though Baptists in general have within their fellowships those who are lost, weak, broken, and unloved, the preachers of this country should be more interested in winning souls and feeding their sheep, rather than in judging others outside their own walls.

I am indeed a true Fundamentalist who has watched insecure, flesh-filled preachers take the very fiery darts of Satan in their own hands and wield them at their congregations and fellow preachers under the cover of “I’m a Fundamentalist and nobody is going to touch God’s anointed…”

Please, if you are going to read and apply the Scriptures to your life as a preacher, why not see John 4:35 as something to apply in your own church and to yourself.

John Williams (SBC member)
Monticello, Utah
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Who Was Joseph?

Seven hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Isaiah predicted His birth with amazing detail. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).

God revealed that same compelling message to Mary, the mother of that holy Child. An angel explained, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

Many wonderful things could be said about Mary. She was a virgin, chaste and pure. When God spoke to her, she alone knew the awesome event about to occur in her life. The angel told her that God of very God would live within her womb.

Little is said about Joseph. Nowhere in Scripture is he referred to as the father of Jesus, for he was not. He is always referred to as the husband of Mary. In Luke 2:41 Mary and he are referred to as the parents of the boy Jesus. Indeed Joseph was selected by God for this special role. To qualify for this responsibility, he must have been a remarkable man who met conditions pleasing to the Lord.

Joseph was godly. God would never have chosen a man to be the husband of Mary had he not been a spiritual and godly man, for Mary was highly favored above all women. Only a man of like stature could be her spouse. God in His sovereignty selected Mary out of all the women of Israel to bear the Messiah. God the Father, in eternity’s chamber, selected the couple who would be the guardians of His Son on earth.

Joseph was compassionate. Under Jewish law, Joseph and Mary were already espoused or engaged by arrangement of their families. They were to be irrevocably betrothed for one year before consummating the marriage. Suppose Joseph had allowed his pride, and fear of what other people might think regarding the betrothal, to keep him from hearing what the angel of the Lord had to say.

He could have brought Mary forth publicly and she would have been stoned to death. But he did not. When he learned that Mary was with child, the Scripture says, “Being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, he was minded to put her away privily” (Matt. 1:19). While Joseph was considering the latter to be a more kind option, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, told him not to fear, and explained the prophecy that was being fulfilled. Joseph did as the angel instructed, taking Mary as his wife but not consummating their marriage until after the birth of Jesus.

Joseph was a law-abiding citizen. If ever there was a wicked government in the world it was the Roman Empire. Yet Joseph obeyed the law and went to Bethlehem to register to pay taxes. He honored God by honoring the king, and in so doing fulfilled the Scripture that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2).

Joseph was obedient to God. God said, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus.” The angel, with orders from the heavenly Father, said to call His name Jesus, meaning Saviour. The Scripture says that when the Babe was born, Joseph did as the Lord had commanded him. Joseph was not obedient to anyone else, not even to his own feelings, but he was obedient to the Lord.

Joseph was courageous. When the order came from Herod to kill the little babies, Joseph knew that if Herod found the Baby Jesus he would murder Him. Joseph was courageous enough to defy the king and put his own life on the line. He took Mary and Jesus into Egypt and kept them there until the word came that Herod was dead. However, Archelaus, son of Herod, took over as ruler of Judea. God again spoke to Joseph in a dream and instructed him to take his family to Nazareth, once again fulfilling prophecy in that Jesus would be called a Nazarene (Matt. 2:23).

Joseph was sensitive and unselfish. When the Baby was born Joseph was there. Later, when the time came to save the Baby’s life, Joseph was there. He worked hard as a carpenter providing for his family.

Joseph did not live long enough to be at the Cross when Jesus was crucified. We know this as Jesus asked John the Baptist to take care of His mother, Mary, and He would not have done so if Joseph were still alive.

Throughout Joseph’s life he marveled at the things spoken about Jesus by angels, wise men, and others. Every year he took Jesus and the rest of the family to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. He knew that the child he was helping

continued on page 47
Back to the Future

The secret to growing great soulwinning churches as we move into the future is to look to the past. The Book of Acts gives us the basic principles of church growth that worked in the first century of Christianity. They will work in every century.

Many churches today are held up as patterns of church growth. Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, is one of those churches. First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida, is another. Churches all over America have experienced the blessings of God in numerical growth. Unquestionably, much can be learned from other churches. There is a danger, however. Perhaps you have experienced cutting pieces of wood. Using a piece just cut to measure the next, you soon discover your pieces are getting smaller. The trick is to go back to the original piece and use it as your pattern.

The same is true in building a soulwinning church. Our pattern is found in the greatest book on church growth ever written—the Book of Acts. The church at Jerusalem provides us an excellent blueprint for building a growing, soulwinning church.

First, there must be a saved people. Acts 2:37-47 indicates that the early church was composed of saved people. Their names were on the heavenly roll. Only a church where the people have genuinely experienced salvation can be used of God to win the lost to Christ. A splendid array of automobile parts is useless in building a house. Time is wasted trying to construct a house with materials for an automobile. The same holds true for trying to build a genuine New Testament church with unbelievers.

A careful study of these verses indicates that the members of the Jerusalem church had experienced a divine call from God. They had experienced the conviction of the Holy Spirit. In verse 37 the preaching of the Word by Peter “pricked” their hearts. Someone has said: “Hearing of Him whom they had pierced, they were pierced.”

A church with questions about the authority of the Bible will never be a soulwinning church.

There was also a human side to their salvation. They repented of sin, and by faith received the Lord into their lives. Perhaps the reason some churches have difficulty becoming New Testament in their ministries is that too few of their members have experienced salvation.

There must also be a steady program. Verses 41-42 give us the fourfold program necessary for a healthy, growing church. The Jerusalem church “continued steadfastly.” After the Day of Pentecost came the persevering days. Something must happen inside a church before anything will happen outside it.

There must be a program of enlightenment. “The apostles’ doctrine” is the New Testament way of saying they devoted themselves to hearing the Word of God as communicated by these divinely selected apostles. A soulwinning church will always be a Bible-preaching, Bible-believing church. A church with questions about the authority of the Bible will never be a soulwinning church.

“Fellowship” indicates the people communed with one another around the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 68:6 says, “God setteth the solitary in families.” Christians must love and care for one another and for the lost. If a church is to win the lost, it must be a friendly, caring, loving place. How sad when men go to bars to find a listening ear, and when beauticians are the only ones with whom some can share their problems.

The Jerusalem church also involved itself in “breaking of bread.” They gathered around the Lord’s Table to remind themselves constantly of what the Lord had done for them. A soulwinning church must keep Christ and His Cross ever preeminent in the minds and hearts of its people.

The church at Jerusalem also continued “in prayers.” Prayer is a prominent feature of a soulwinning church. The prayer ministry is the generator of the church. This is where power is generated for everything it does. A church must go forward on its knees.

The result of a steady program will be a spiritual product. Verses 43-47 reveal that the Jerusalem church did its part and the Lord did His part. The people in the church gave of their substance. A soulwinning church is a generous church. Money is necessary to reach people for Christ today. People who have a genuine desire to win the lost to Christ are willing to pay the price. The Jerusalem believers also gave their story. Evidently, wherever they went they told others about Jesus. As the people did what they were to do, the Lord blessed their soulwinning efforts. He added to the church daily those who were being saved. This is how the Lord builds His church.

New Testament Churches can be built as the twenty-first century looms ahead. The way to move forward is to look backward. Let’s claim our cities for Jesus as we look back to the future!

by Jerry Vines
HURTING?

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I rinsed the dishes and loaded the dishwasher as Barb gave me the formula I needed. Twelve to 15 hours of complete darkness every day for three months. There can't be any light during that time—not even for a moment—or it won't bloom.

It had been almost a year since my poinsettia was given to me. Since last Christmas it had dropped its red bracts and sprouted lots of healthy green leaves. I anticipated a beautiful plant to use for this year’s decorating, but now it seemed improbable that I could produce conditions severe enough for it to bloom. The sunshine and water I had given it were no favor.

I could imagine nurseries all over the country with important sealed rooms, and “Do Not Enter” signs on the locked doors for most of the day. Inside, thousands of green plants hovered in the darkness. During those required hours of darkness, no one would be allowed to enter. Even a flashlight or a lighted “Exit” sign over the door would spoil the beauty being prepared.

Pondering this brave little plant, I saw a parallel to the dark times in my life—the emotional pain of a miscarriage, financial strain, the death of my young husband, the loneliness of being a single parent. Those were times when I longed for a glimmer of light. The darkness seemed absolute and terminal. God seemed far away. But instead, God was giving me fastidious care. He was the professional—a master gardener who knew there was only one way to produce brilliant blooms in my life.

God, a master gardener, knew there was only one way to produce brilliant blooms in my life. And predictably, those times of hardship are now precious to me because of what they produced—a deep appreciation for my many blessings, a more mature faith, and a greater trust in God. He hadn’t forgotten me after all! Happiness could not have taught me so well.

I think Joseph and Mary must have observed the same formula at work. At times they must have longed for a glimmer of light in the darkness they were experiencing: Joseph pondering divorce from his beloved Mary because of her apparent unfaithfulness to him... arriving in Bethlehem to find no place to stay. To think their baby would be born in a stable and slumber in a feeding trough! There were more dark days ahead—Simeon’s warning that a sword would pierce their souls because of this child, and a night flight to Egypt to escape Herod’s search-and-destroy mission for the newborn King. And always there was the shadow of the Cross.

Yet out of the darkness came angels rejoicing. “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). God’s wonderful salvation was blooming in a dusky cave.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the dark days of autumn produce the poinsettia’s colorful display just in time for the holidays. Maybe God put it there to remind us that faith grows in hard times. Out of the darkness, expect rejoicing.

Donna MacLean is a free-lance writer in Federal Way, Washington.
MARY'S PRAYER

God. O infant-God. Heaven's fairest child. Conceived by the union of divine grace with our disgrace. Sleep well.

Sleep well. Bask in the coolness of this night bright with diamonds. Sleep well, for the heat of anger simmers nearby. Enjoy the silence of the crib, for the noise of confusion rumbles in your future. Savor the sweet safety of my arms, for a day is soon coming when I cannot protect you.

Rest well, tiny hands. For though you belong to a king, you will touch no satin, own no gold. You will grasp no pen, guide no brush. No, your tiny hands are reserved for works more precious:
- to touch a leper's open wound,
- to wipe a widow's weary tear,
- to claw the ground of Gethsemane.

Your hands, so tiny, so tender, so white—clutched tonight in an infant's fist. They aren't destined to hold a scepter nor wave from a palace balcony. They are reserved instead for a Roman spike that will staple them to a Roman cross.

Sleep deeply, tiny eyes. Sleep while you can. For soon the blurriness will clear and you will see the mess we have made of your world.
- You will see our nakedness, for we cannot hide.
- You will see our selfishness, for we cannot give.
- You will see our pain, for we cannot heal.

O eyes that will see hell's darkest pit and witness her ugly prince... sleep, please sleep; sleep while you can.

Lay still, tiny mouth. Lay still mouth from which eternity will speak.
- Tiny tongue that will soon summon the dead,
- that will define grace,
- that will silence our foolishness.

Rosebud lips—upon which ride a starborn kiss of forgiveness to those who believe you, and of death to those who deny you—lay still.

And tiny feet cupped in the palm of my hand, rest. For many difficult steps lie ahead for you.

- Do you taste the dust of the trails you will travel?
- Do you feel the cold sea water upon which you will walk?
- Do you wrench at the invasion of the nail you will bear?
- Do you fear the steep descent down the spiral staircase into Satan's domain?

Rest, tiny feet. Rest today so that tomorrow you might walk with power. Rest. For millions will follow in your steps.

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It all happened in a sandwich cafe as Nancy and I paused for a brief respite from hectic Christmas shopping. I never intended for it to happen. It just did.

“Well, what do you want this year?” Nancy’s question sounded strangely distant as I found myself caught by a wrenching tide of emotion. I couldn’t answer. Instead, I stared into the noisy world.

Forgotten Treasure
Caught off guard I had just blundered, once again, into a solemn world where laughter is a forgotten treasure and joy a word that does not translate.

All she wanted to know was what I wanted for Christmas. All I really wanted I could never have. Only weeks before, we had laid to rest one who was dearest on earth to me—the sweet gentle lady who was my mother, Dorothy Mitchell. We all watched silently as she stepped so, so quietly into the cold waters that swept her into the loving arms of Jesus and Dad's waiting embrace.

She was gone. And now I was falling victim to the capricious pranks of the grief process. At Christmastime we are conditioned to expect at least one wish to come true. But the sinister realities of life teach us that not even Christmas can generate enough magic for some dreams. As adults we accept this, yet we cannot always prevent the disappointments from crystallizing into depression, anger, or despair. The season to be jolly sometimes only punctuates painful memories.

Not even Christians are exempt from this. The hearth has grown cold. There is no outstretched hand, no familiar voice, no special gift nestled in the tree. I'm told many will not be able to survive this happiest of holidays to ring in the New Year. Perhaps, as you read, your soul resonates with hurt that will not subside. Your heart threatens to explode in a sea of sorrow. You, too, wonder if there is a way out of this dreadful place.

There is. Take my hand, dear saint, and walk with me awhile. There is a way that leads from here to the place where our Saviour wants us to be, a world of joy and gladness, where peace flows like a river to heal broken hearts.

Lay your burdens down. As we walk, be careful to notice the signs that mark danger zones and point the way. The first of these warns of the dangerous Pits of Self-Pity. Here the path narrows precipitously. The way is slippery and cannot be navigated unless you lay aside all extra baggage and cling to the promises of God. The area is littered with the rusted weapons of bitterness and blame. Many hoard these as defenses against further suffering. But here they can be carried no further. They will only cause you to stumble into the muck and mire of self-pity.

I had just blundered, once again, into a solemn world where laughter is a forgotten treasure and joy a word that does not translate.

Look to Jesus. Study the manger. See the God of the universe wrapped in the helpless form of a baby. Remember it is His image into which you are being changed. The exalted Saviour was first the suffering Saviour. Before He was honored He was humbled. We always rebel against this. We ask, Why Me? What have I done to deserve this? But we forget that the way of suffering is normal for those who follow our Lord. The manger also shows us that Jesus understands. The hand that reaches to help you today is yet scarred. Yes, He knows your pain. He knows exactly what you need. He knows how to be rejected, to lose a loved one, to be misunderstood, to have so much to give and no one to receive it. Do tears flow you cannot control? Jesus wept. Are you alone? Jesus was forsaken. Put your frail hand in His. Dry those tears. Stand tall. And walk into the sunlight with Him.

Lift up the hands that hang down. When we are filled with self-pity, when we take our eyes off Jesus, we are robbed of strength to help others. Nothing is more destructive to spiritual fruitfulness. Lift up those hands that hang down and put them to work. We are here only to do the Father's will. When it is done He will promote us to glory. Here we arrive at the passage from the world of tears to the pleasant fields of home. And now you know that this mournful place is not a distant land at all. It is a world that exists inside each one of us. The way out is found when we open our hearts to others. God made joy and laughter to be shared. They cannot be found in the miry pits of self-pity. They are found in the bright sunshine of God's vineyard. Here we find reason to live, resource to work, and wonderful release from bondage to our circumstances.

“What do you think of the gifts we got for the children?” Nancy was still speaking. Her hand pressed into mine as we stepped out into the crowded shopping mall. “Christmas is only a week away. We still have Grandpa to buy for. Oh, we almost forgot Betty. And what about the neighbors? I can hardly wait to see Melanie's eyes when she opens her big gift!”

Christmas really is the happiest time of the year.

by Daniel R. Mitchell
NATIVITY

by Martin Luther

18  Fundamentalist Journal
The birth of Christ took place exactly when the Emperor Augustus sent out a decree that all the world should be taxed. This was no accident. The birth of Christ was timed to coincide with the census because God wanted to teach us the duty of obedience even to a heathen government. Had He been born prior to the census, it might have appeared that He was unwilling to be subject to the Roman Empire. At the very first moment of His life, Christ and His parents had to give evidence of obedience, not to God, but to the heathen emperor, the enemy of the Jews. This is the strongest proof that Christ's kingdom is to be distinguished from that of the world. Christ did not wish to erect a kingdom like an earthly king, but wished to be subject to a heathen government. Is not this shameful, that Christ should obey a power that His people and His household regarded as an abomination? But Christ obeyed the civil government of the emperor. Every Christian, therefore, should let Augustus administer his realm—should not hinder but help.

The law of the census required that each household be present in his hometown at the time of the enrollment. Joseph was of the lineage of David and had to go to Bethlehem, the city of David. Despite his royal ancestry, he was so poor that he had been unable to make a living in Judea and for that reason had transferred to Nazareth. Now he had to go back. Scripture says that he took with him “Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.” She would have had good reason to excuse herself from making the journey so close to her time, but she said nothing because she wished to trouble no one. We can see how poor Joseph must have been that he could not afford to hire some old woman or neighbor to stay with Mary and look after her while he was gone.

How unobtrusively and simply do these events take place on earth that are so heralded in heaven! On earth it happened in this wise: There was a poor young wife, Mary of Nazareth, among the meanest dwellers of the town, so little esteemed that none noticed the great wonder she carried. She was silent, did not vaunt herself, but served her husband, who had no man or maid.

They heard that a young wife was lying in a cow stall and no one gave heed. Shame on you, wretched Bethlehem!

The journey was certainly more than a day from Nazareth to Bethlehem, which lies on the farther side of Jerusalem. Joseph had thought, “When we get to Bethlehem, we shall be among relatives and can borrow everything.” A fine idea that was!

Bad enough that a young bride could not have had her baby at Nazareth in her own house instead of making all that journey of three days when heavy with child! How much worse that when she arrived there was no room for her! The inn was full. No one would release a room to this pregnant woman. She had to go to a cow stall and there bring forth the Maker of all creatures because nobody would give way.

“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.”

When now they were come to Bethlehem, the Evangelist says that they were, of all, the lowest and the most despised, and must make way for everyone until they were shoved into a stable to make a common lodging and table with the cattle, while many cutthroats lounged like lords in the inn. They did not recognize what God was doing in the stable. With all their eating, drinking, and finery, God left them empty, and this comfort and treasure was hidden from them. Oh, what a dark night it was in Bethlehem that this light should not have been seen. Thus God shows that He has no regard for what the world is and has and does. And the world shows that it does not know or consider what God is and has and does.

Joseph had to do his best, and it may well be that he asked some maid to fetch water or something else, but we do not read that anyone came to help. They heard that a young wife was lying in a cow stall and no one gave heed. Shame on you, wretched Bethlehem! The inn ought to have been burned with brimstone, for even though Mary had been a beggar maid or unwed, anybody at such a time should have been glad to give her a hand.

There are many of you in this congregation who think to yourselves: “If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby! I would have washed His linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!” Yes, you would! You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. Childish and silly thoughts are these! Why don’t you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ Himself.

The birth was still more pitiable. No one regarded this young wife bringing forth her firstborn. No one took her condition to heart. No one noticed that in a strange place she had not the very least thing needful in childbirth. There she was without preparation: no light, no fire, in the
dead of night, in thick darkness. No one came to give the customary assistance. The guests swarming in the inn were carousing, and no one attended to this woman. I think myself if Joseph and Mary had realized that her time was so close she might perhaps have been left in Nazareth. And now think what she could use for swaddling clothes—some garment she could spare, perhaps her veil—certainly not Joseph's breeches which are now on exhibition at Aachen.

She "wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." Why not in a cradle, on a bench, or on the ground? Because they had no cradle, bench, table, board, nor anything whatever except the manger of the oxen. That was the first throne of this King. There in a stable, without man or maid, lay the Creator of all the world. And there was the maid of 15 years bringing forth her firstborn without water, fire, light, or pan, a sight for tears! What Mary and Joseph did next, no one knows. The scholars say they adored. They must have marveled that this Child was the Son of God. He was also a real human being. Those who say that Mary was not a real mother lose all the joy. He was a true Baby, with flesh, blood, hands, and legs. He slept, cried, and did everything else that a baby does only without sin.

Think, women, there was no one there to bathe the Baby. No warm water, nor even cold. No fire, no light. The mother was herself midwife and the maid. The cold manger was the bed and the bathtub. Who showed the poor girl what to do? She had never had a baby before. I am amazed that the little one did not freeze. Do not make of Mary a stone. It must have gone straight to her heart that she was so abandoned. She was flesh and blood, and must have felt miserable—and Joseph too—that she was left in this way, all alone, with no one to help, in a strange land in the middle of winter. Her eyes were moist even though she was happy, and aware that the Baby was God's Son and the Saviour of the world. She was not stone. For the higher people are in the favor of God, the more tender are they.

Mary was the mother of the Lord. With trembling and reverence, before nestling Him to herself, she laid him down, because her faith said to her, "He will be 'the Son of the Highest.'" No one else on earth had this faith, not even Joseph, for although he had been informed by the angel the word did not go to his heart as to the heart of Mary, the mother.

Let us, then, meditate upon the Nativity just as we see it happening in our own babies. I would not have you contemplate the deity of Christ, the majesty of Christ, but rather His flesh. Look upon Baby Jesus. Divinity may terrify man. Inexpressible majesty will crush him. That is why Christ took on our humanity, save for sin, that He should not terrify us but rather that with love and favor He should console and confirm.

Behold Christ lying in the lap of His young mother, still a virgin. What can be sweeter than the Babe, what more lovely than the mother! What fairer than her youth! What more gracious than her virginity! Look at the Child, knowing nothing. Yet all that is belongs to Him, that your conscience should not fear but take comfort in Him. Doubt nothing. Watch Him springing in the lap of the maiden. Laugh with Him. Look upon this Lord of Peace and your spirit will be at peace. See how God invites you in many ways. He places before you a Babe with whom you may take refuge. You cannot fear Him, for nothing is more appealing to man than a babe. Are you affrighted? Then come to Him, lying in the lap of the fairest and sweetest maid. You will see how great is the divine goodness, which seeks above all else that you should not despair. Trust Him! Trust Him! Here is the Child in whom is salvation. To me there is no greater consolation given than this. That Christ became man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of His most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to this gurgling Babe and believe that He is come, not to judge you, but to save.

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The Bell-Ringer

A Christmas Story
J

anet Renee Snooter hated her name. She hated dresses and petticoats and lace and bonnets. She wore dungarees whenever she could, which was most of the time. To her mother alone she was Janet Renee. To everyone else she was simply “J.R.”

Three days before Christmas 1949, J.R. was sitting on the church steps of Whitville, Georgia, angrily kicking up clumps of dirt. She did not speak. She only scowled at anyone who approached.

Henry Christianson watched from his rocker on the porch of his small cottage. After a quarter of an hour he set out to confront the church-step nemesis.

“Grrrrrr,” growled J.R. as he neared.

Henry wrinkled his placid face and growled back.

“GrrrrRRrrrr!” growled J.R. once again.

Henry straightened up, threw back his head, and loosed a lion-like roar.

J.R. was not impressed. “Go away,” she snarled. “I’m mad.”

“Mad enough to cry, huh?”

“Only babies cry.”

“Oh. OK,” answered Henry, carefully settling his old bones onto the steps beside her. “I’ll be mad with you. No one should be mad alone.”

For the next 10 minutes the two growled, snarled, and roared at every perplexed passerby who wandered within range.

“What are we mad about?” Henry inquired.

“I don’t want to be Mary,” snapped J.R. “They want me to wear bed-sheets and hold a baby doll and smile sweetly and all that stuff.”

“That’s terrible.”

“You bet it is. I’d much rather be a shepherd and carry one of those big sticks. I’d belt anyone who came near me.”

“Why?”

J.R. paused. “Everyone wants me to be a little lady.”

“Being a lady isn’t so bad,” smiled Henry. “I was married to a wonderful lady, and she could climb trees as good as I could. She could pull the church bell as good as I could, too.”

“That big bell?” J.R. was impressed.

“Yep. She was always a tomboy, but one day she realized there was something special about being a woman. She was a wife, a mother, and a good friend.” Henry nonchalantly tugged on his beard. “You wait. Someday the Lord will show you there is something special about being a girl.”

“Huh.” J.R. looked at Henry with doubt large in her eyes. “You won’t live that long.”

“Yes I will.”

“How do you know? You’re old, and it’s going to be years before I’m ready to have lawn parties and keep house.”

“I’m sure I’ll see it. How old are you, 10?”

“I’m 11.” J.R. drew herself up to her full height.

“Well, it’s only three days till Christmas, and if I make it out of bed to ring the bell each Christmas morning, I know I’ll last another year.”

“How do you know that?”

“It hasn’t failed me yet.”

Leaving J.R. to her thoughts, Henry returned to his porch rocker and adjusted the chair for a better view of the small church standing in a picturesque space all its own.

“Stand as proudly today as she did the day I helped build her; he thought. His eyes rose from the front steps to the belfry, where resided the most beautiful thing in his life—the bell.

He had been the one to pry open the crate when the bell came in on the train, and rightly so, for it was at his urging that a bell was installed at all.

“Why do we need a bell?” the mayor had asked. “We’re such a small town. You can stand at one end of Main Street and yell to the other end without breathin’ hard.”

But the town had grown. Main Street spread out, and the farmers who settled on the town’s outskirts relied on the bell for news of fire, emergency, birth, and death. Henry had been summoned to ring his bell the day Mrs. Iverson gave birth to the town’s first and only set of triplets—three pulls for a baby, nine pulls in all, without a break. The bell had grown to be an important fixture in town life.

Walking down Main Street, Franklin Reaves was engrossed in thought. Why wouldn’t the mayor and the other elders of the town listen to his ideas? He desperately wanted the town to grow, to flex its muscles in the state, but the people of Whitville were content to remain a solid and staid secret.

He was going to teach them about progress if it took every ounce of his strength. He would marry Leslie Van Horton in the spring. Then he would take her to Atlanta and find a job in the state legislature. There he would impress everyone with his brilliance and new ideas, and before long he would be governor! But first he would have to do something with his hometown. How could a young man influence the state when the folks in his own town would not even listen to him?

In his reverie he nearly ran down Emily Moffit as she came out of the general store. “Excuse me,” she said, flustered and embarrassed, but Franklin nodded absently and continued on. Watching from his porch, Henry saw Franklin and understood. He whispered, “He looks like me 50 years ago.”

Unknown to Henry and Franklin, Miss Leslie Van Horton was at that moment boarding a train to Atlanta, where she had plans to meet and marry a bachelor senator she met at a pre-Christmas party. “I know it isn’t socially acceptable to elope,” she had penned in a farewell note to her parents, “but I believe the beneficial social consequences will soon outweigh any strain this may bring on our collective reputations.”

by Angela Elwell Hunt
When Franklin Reaves heard the news the next day, his mood matched the gray clouds that had hung over the town all week. He stormed out of his home and worked off his anxiety pacing up and down Main Street. From his porch Henry Christianson watched as Franklin passed once, twice, thrice. On the fourth pass Henry stopped him.

"Young man, please come here before you wear out the sidewalk!" Henry commanded.

Franklin glanced up and blankly obeyed.

"Tell me what's troubling you."

The words poured out of Franklin—how his hopes were forever being dashed to pieces, how he couldn’t convince anyone, even his fiancee—who was his fiancee no longer—of the validity of his dreams, how life was forever turning a deaf ear to his impassioned pleas.

"All I want is to make something of myself," he concluded. "I thought Leslie believed in me. With her connections and my dreams, I knew we could go someplace. But once again I find myself at a dead end."

As the overcast afternoon became a velvet evening, Henry stood and motioned to Franklin. "Let's take a walk over to the church. "I've got to sweep the vestibule and make sure my beauty is adapting to the chill."

"Your beauty?"

Henry chuckled. "My beauty is the bell. My lady was beautiful, too, but she is in heaven."

As they walked to the church Henry told Franklin about his own love, Susannah. "She had no connections and neither of us had money, but like you, we had dreams. We dreamed of children and a home and many years together. The Lord above made our sweet friend—his fiancee—who was his fiancee no longer—of the validity of his dreams. We had been married only a year when Susannah died giving birth to our son. The baby died, too. I rang the bell for their funerals. It was my way of asking the Lord to welcome Susannah and Michael with the bells of heaven."

Franklin listened respectfully, but impatiently. If Henry's story was supposed to have a point, he had missed it. He flung up his hands in frustration. "Henry, that's an interesting story, but your dreams came true. You married your girl!"

Henry slowly shook his head, and Franklin saw a flicker of sorrow in his eyes. "No, Mr. Reaves, not all our dreams came true. We had been married only a year when Susannah died giving birth to our son. The baby died, too. I rang the bell for their funerals. It was my way of asking the Lord to welcome Susannah and Michael with the bells of heaven."

"You go on home and learn to open your eyes to the love around you. You may find your dreams where you least expect them."

"It was she who told me this church needed a bell. 'I won't be married in a church without a bell,' she said. 'I want the whole world to celebrate with us.'"

Franklin gazing upward. "Are you all right?" she asked.

Franklin was startled by her voice. "Oh, Emily," he smiled. "You've caught me daydreaming. Yes, I'm fine. Merry Christmas."

Emily Moffitt came in and paused for a moment at the sight of Franklin. "Are you all right?"

Emily Moffitt came in and paused for a moment at the sight of Franklin. "Are you all right?"

"She blushed. She had lived down the street from him for years, but tonight Franklin noticed for the first time how pretty she was. He smiled as he recalled pushing her on the swing in the school yard. Now here she stood, a woman grown, and..."
beautiful in a rosy velvet cloak. He offered his arm to her. "Shall we go in?"

The characters for the pastor’s Nativity scene assembled in the vestibule. There was Joseph in a velveteen bathrobe imported from Atlanta, three shepherds with their staves held firmly by the pastor’s wife (she had already stopped two “sword fights”), and Mary, a pouty J.R. Snooter.

As the strains of “Away in a Manger” tinkled out from the piano, the pastor’s wife quickly positioned the baby doll in a fold of J.R.’s costume. The congregation oooed and ahed as the children filed in and took their places around the makeshift manger at the front of the church.

The pastor began his reading of Luke 2. J.R. looked around, bewildered by the glow that seemed to shine from every face. What was this? Why did Christmas and a baby warm every weary heart?

“And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.”

That was her cue. J.R. took the doll from her robe and began to wrap it in the baby quilt someone had loaned for that express purpose.

The congregation began singing “Gentle Mary Laid Her Child,” and J.R. looked at the doll in concentration. What if this were a real baby? What if she really were Mary, chosen by God to have a baby who would die for the sins of the entire world? How could she, unmarried and carrying a child, face her family and friends?

Mary was tough, thought J.R. with respect. She knew what would happen and she kept a stiff upper lip. She even seemed to be glad God chose her. The shepherds stared in surprise as Janet Renee Snooter cuddled the baby and wiped a tear from her eye.

The pastor cleared his throat and gained the congregation’s attention. “There aren’t many here who could afford to give everyone a gift,” he smiled, “so I thought we might simply share ‘thank-yous’ to each other as a Christmas gesture.”

Janet Renee Snooter was the first to speak. “I want to thank the pastor and his wife for allowing me to play Mary in the pageant.” The pastor raised an eyebrow and Janet grinned at him. “I mean it.”

Emily Moffitt stood. “I cannot help but thank God for sending Pastor, “but I’m going to take this plaque to his house and make it official. He’s retired!”

After the service the pastor and Smitherton rapped on the door of Henry’s cottage. They heard only a low moan. When they opened the door they found Henry unconscious on the floor.

A quick examination by Doc Pugh revealed that Henry had fallen and broken his hip. “His heart is weakening—he’s in great pain,” the doctor told the two other men. “No telling how long he’s been here on the floor.”

The men put Henry to bed, but in his delirium he struggled with them. “I’ve got to go tend my beauty,” he murmured. “Got to ring the bell for Christmas morning.”

“Impossible, man!” exclaimed the mayor. “You’re ill.”

“Henry, you must lie still,” soothed the pastor. “You will be able to ring the bell when you’re better. We will not retire you.” (The mayor glared at the pastor and the pastor glared back.) “You will be just fine.”

It was a long and quiet night. The town families had long since retired to bed. There were no more carols, no brightly burning fires, no presents. But somehow Henry knew Christmas was approaching, and his murmuring about bells and ringing became more intense as dawn drew near.

When the first rays of sunlight pierced the gloom of the room, Henry opened his eyes and spoke clearly. “What beautiful bells,” he whispered. “What a beautiful symphony of bells.”

The pastor and the mayor looked at each other in bewilderment. Suddenly, the church bell began to ring rhythmically, ding-dong, ding-dong, its mellow tones sounding over the waking town in celebration of Christmas.

Henry took a last breath and smiled toward the heavens. “Beautiful bells,” he murmured.

Inside the church vestibule, completely unaware of the heavenly symphony in Henry’s honor, Franklin, Emily, and Janet Renee pulled and laughed together... for the bell-ringer.

The church bell rang rhythmically, its mellow tones sounding over the waking town in celebration of Christmas.
Christmas Eve... the night crisp and cold outside, warm and snug inside. I sat enjoying my grandchildren laughing and playing, eager for the night to pass and for Christmas morning.

Marla, 9 years old, sat on the floor by my chair. "Grandma, tell us about the Christmas Grandpa almost divorced you for wanting to go to that welfare place for some food they were giving out to the poor."

"Marla, as long as he lived, your granddaddy never almost divorced me! Where'd you hear such a thing?"

"My daddy told me."

"Bob, you've been telling that to your children?"

"Yes, I have," he laughed, "except for Marla's little input about the divorce. I think it's a great story, Mama. If you only knew how you looked standing your ground—all of your 5 feet 2 inches against Dad's 6-foot-4."

"Well, son, it wasn't funny to us."

"What happened, Grandma? Tell us! Please, Grandma, tell us." Their clamorous appeals drowned out my protests.

"Hush, children! You're hurting my tired old ears. Now get down here with Marla—all of you! And be quieter,
Fear was rampant in our lives as we faced the bleak future.

by Lea Herrin

Christmas of 1935.

Robert worked in the railroad shops until October 1933. The railroad was the livelihood of our small southern town. I was 33 and Robert was 39. I had just given birth to our seventh child when Robert came home with the news of his layoff. Fear became the predominant emotion between us. President Roosevelt had said in his inaugural address in March 1933, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” But fear was rampant in our lives as we faced the bleak future. There were no available jobs in our little town. Finally, Robert found a small dairy farm and we traded our home for it. We spent Christmas of 1933 on the farm. The winter was lean and hard. Our seven children ranged in ages from 15 years to 3 months, with four in school. The two oldest (Bob, 15, and Jake, 13) helped Robert with the milking. The feed bill grew larger than the income. The only milk money we could depend on was from a few customers buying directly from us because they could not afford the pasteurized milk in the markets.

I had heard of the Federal Emergency Relief Act, but I did not know much about it until Ethel came home from school with a notice that the local agency would be open to serve the needy the week of Christmas.

“Mama, I heard the teachers saying those people would be giving out turkeys this year. Where do they get turkeys to give to people?”

“I don’t know, honey, but I’d sure like to have one for Christmas.”

“Yeah, me too. I can’t remember the taste of turkey anymore.”

I showed the notice to Robert. It was to be completed and returned to the school for the agency to collect. We were asked to list children’s names, ages, and sex.

“Robert, I want to fill out this form and return it.”

“Woman, have you gone daft? We’ve never taken charity and we’re not starting now!”

“A turkey for Christmas dinner would be a treat, Robert—a treat we can’t buy.”

“So kill a chicken!”

“I’ve done that until I’ve about killed off all the layers. Do you want us without eggs?”

“No, but I don’t want handouts either! I won’t have people saying Robert Anderson can’t provide for his family and is on welfare. Now, that’s my final word!” He stomped off to bed.

I sat looking at that piece of paper, not knowing what to do. I reached for the Bible and there by lamplight I read again the story of the birth of Jesus. When I finished I had my answer. I filled out the form, left it in the Bible, and went to bed. My mind was made up.

The following morning I gave the form to Ethel to return to her teacher. That night, when the children were in bed, I spoke to Robert as he made his move to go to bed, too.

“Robert, we need to talk.”

He turned back, a questioning look on his face. “Is it about that form?”

by Lea Herrin

please, if you want to hear what I say.” They sat on the floor, all 10 faces looking up at me.

“Granny, I’ve never heard the story,” 10-year-old Glenn spoke up.

I looked at Ethel, my oldest daughter. She shrugged. “I never told him... it wasn’t funny to me,” she grimly responded.

“Well! I want to know where was I when all this took place? I don’t remember it,” Peggy, the youngest of my nine children demanded.

“You weren’t born then, silly girl,” Bob teased. “You never lived on the farm—we moved before your time.”

“By golly, I sure remember it,” laughed Jake, my second son. “Bob and I peeped when we heard Dad’s angry voice. I’d never seen him so upset with Mama.”

“Will you guys please let Grandma tell us,” pleaded Marla.

“Honey, there’s not that much to tell. It was a long time ago, way back in 1935. Times were hard and so many people were out of work. Your granddaddy lost his job with the railroad, and it was rough trying to feed and clothe our family of nine. I learned they would be giving out turkeys and fruit for Christmas through the relief program, and I thought we should go for a Christmas basket. Your granddaddy, ashamed to admit he needed help in providing for his family, refused to go—and ordered me not to go. What’s funny to everybody—but Ethel—is the fuss he made when I said I’d go without him. He might have stood over 6 feet tall, but that didn’t stop me. I was thinking about my children.”

“But where was Santa, Grandma? Didn’t he bring toys and stuff?”

3-year-old Andy wanted to know.

I laughed at his question and hugged him to me. “Baby, I think old Santa was out of work, too. Now, all of you get to bed if Santa’s coming here tonight. Remember your prayers and thank the good Lord for this happy Christmas with those hard times behind us. We all have so much for which to be thankful.”

The children were soon settled. I went on to bed, but didn’t sleep for a long time as I thought back to that
“Yes. I filled it out and sent it to school this morning with Ethel.”

His face clouded in anger: “I told you not to do that!”

“But I did. I didn’t do it just to go against you. I did it for our children.”

“And just how do you plan to get this handout? You’re so heavy with child that you can’t go. You know pregnant women don’t go out in public in their eighth month. I’ll not go and stand in line for people to gawk—a robust man and can’t support his family.”

“You don’t have to go. Bob can drive me.”

“And you’re determined to go? You’ll really go through with this regardless of what I say or how I feel?”

“Robert, how do you think Joseph felt having to take Mary with him to Bethlehem, a wife in her full term of pregnancy?”

“That’s different—the law required him to go to Bethlehem.”

“That didn’t make it any easier for Joseph. Think how he must have felt when the only room he could find for his family was a stable. But he and Mary weren’t thinking about people gawking and laughing. Their concern was the baby. Now my concern is our children. We can’t afford the kind of Christmas we always had when you worked for the railroad. I’m not blaming you for the hard time we’re having, but my heart aches when I see the disappointment in the eyes of our children. They don’t fully understand this change in our lives. I don’t want charity either, but I’m willing to put my feelings aside when it comes to them.”

Robert threw up both hands. “OK! OK! You’ve made your point! Why don’t you just call me Joseph?” He laughed. His eyes were tender and understanding as he slipped his arms around me.

Two days later he came in with his own surprise. “Pat, you know that railroad meeting hall next door to the Joneses? Well, when I delivered milk tonight they told me the railroad is having a Christmas tree there on the 23rd for the children of laid-off railroad workers. Why don’t I take the small ones?”

“That’s really nice of the railroad. Think of all the children they will make happy.”

“Well,” he mumbled, “I’ll have a chance to see old buddies I worked with at the shops.”

“Who do you think you’re fooling?” I teased. “You’re a good man, Robert Anderson, and I love you.”

He did go to the relief agency and came home loaded with good things for all—turkey, fruit, and staple goods. Then I understood the questions on the form about individual family members. They had denim shirts, overalls, and pants for the boys; cotton cloth for dresses for the girls; and warm socks for all.

Our 11-year-old Ethel, always the persnickety one of our children, took one look at the cloth and blurted, “Everybody will know where my dress came from. I won’t wear it!”

I understood her feelings. “We’ll see, honey,” was all I said. I had a bit of lace I’d been saving and some little pearl buttons. I used the lace around the collar with four pearl buttons down the waistfront. Ethel saw the dress Christmas Day. “Oh, Mama, it’s pretty! I’m sorry I was ugly.”

Robert said the blessing at our Christmas dinner, his voice almost breaking with emotion. As he started to carve our turkey, he looked around at each face. “Well, children, you won’t understand this right now, but I just want to say we have Joseph and Mary to thank for this old bird.” His eyes were glittering with love and pride for his family. We were all happy in the warmth of our love on that cold Christmas Day in 1935 during the Great Depression throughout the land.

Lea Herrin is a free-lance writer in Jacksonville, Florida.
Christmas was determined to become a pastor. He memorized a sermon he found in a theological thesaurus, and with great ability preached it as his own at a cottage meeting. Presbyterians insisted that their pastors have more education than Christmas had, however, so he left them. Timothy Thomas, pastor of the Aberduar Baptist Chapel, baptized the young man in 1788 in the Duar River at Lianybyther, and he was soon preaching in area churches.

Two years later the Brecknockshire Baptist Association in the scenic mountainous region to the east (southeast Wales) ordained him as an itinerant missionary to work in the small churches in and around the Lleyn Peninsula that juts into the Irish Sea in northwest Wales.

On his 26th birthday, December 5, 1792, Christmas was born in Ysgaerwen in the parish of Liandyssul in Cardiganshire, Wales. Samuel and Joanna Evans gave birth to their first child, a boy. They toyed with the idea of calling him Vasover, after a famous Welsh preacher of earlier centuries, little realizing that their child would one day be an even greater preacher. Instead, in honor of the day, they called him Christmas.

Samuel died in his cobbler's stall when Christmas was only a lad of 9. Though his mother tried to keep the family together and even "went on the county," she finally had to farm her children out to relatives.

Christmas left the village in southwestern Wales where he had been born and went to live with his Uncle Jim, his mother's brother, in Lianvihangel-ar-Arth, to the south in Carmarthenshire. Of those years between 9 and 15 Evans later wrote, "It would be difficult to find a more unconscionable man than James Lewis in the whole course of a wicked world."

Christmas nearly lost his life several times while on his uncle's farm. He was stabbed with a knife, almost drowned, fell from a tree with a knife in his hand, and almost died when a runaway horse charged through a narrow opening with him on his back.

Running away, he spent the next four years as an itinerant farm servant. In 1782 he arrived in Llawrbyther, where he was converted under the influence of a Presbyterian pastor named David Davies. Davies taught the illiterate young man in a barn by candlelight how to read his Bible in Welsh and English.

The hoodlum gang Christmas ran with did not like the idea that he had "gotten religion," so as he was coming home from an evening service, six of them jumped him and beat him unconscious. As a result, he lost most of the sight in his right eye for the rest of his life.

This gifted, visually impaired preacher was God's Christmas present to Wales.
Dear Subscriber:

This is our final issue. We would like to thank you for your faithfulness, prayers, and letters through the years. We trust that Fundamentalist Journal has been a source of encouragement and information to you and your family. We wish you a Merry Christmas and pray that God will bless you throughout the New Year.

The Staff of Fundamentalist Journal
ber 25, 1792, Evans married Catherine Jones, a teenager, in what had been a little congregation but under his preaching had filled to overflowing. Because of earlier preaching tours through northern Wales, he had already become a widely known preacher.

In the midst of a cold winter the couple traveled north and crossed by ferry to their new home on the island of Anglesey. The parsonage was a humble one-room cottage with a roof so low that Evans, who was over 6 feet tall, could not stand upright in his own house! Nevertheless they lived for the next 20 years in that house in Llangefni, on the equivalent of about a hundred dollars a year. Always hungry for knowledge, Evans here mastered Hebrew and Greek.

A crisis in his ministry provoked a change in his preaching style. A minor anti-Calvinistic sect called the Sandemanians had swept the island, and Evans spent all his time preaching against them.

"The Sandemanian heresy afflicted me so much," he later wrote, "as to drive away the spirit of prayer for the salvation of sinners."

On a preaching journey to the south of Anglesey, as he was climbing up the road near Cader Idris Mountain from Dolgellau to Machynlleth, he paused for what turned out to be three hours of prayer for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Revival broke out all over Wales shortly after. One of his biographers notes, "In two years his ten preaching places increased to twenty, and over six hundred converts were added to the churches."

The Holy Spirit used a dramatic, new preaching style to win many to the Lord. In fact, Evans may have been the first to make storytelling part of evangelistic preaching.

The tale is told that when he preached on the story of the Gadarene demoniac, he used such vivid gestures that people were sure "the one-eyed man from Anglesey," as he was widely know, was the biblical character!

Like many great preachers, Evans had an excellent sense of humor. Crowds flocked to hear him. His oratory was so brilliant that at one moment he had his listeners laughing uproariously, and the next moment they would be in tears.

Though Welsh Baptists had been rather apathetic, under Evans's inspiration they revived and reached

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their highest point numerically by 1825.

All the resulting new churches meant that many new chapels had to be built to house the people. With Catherine behind him on his faithful horse, Lemon, Christmas made 40 exhausting preaching tours, an average of 2 each year, from one end of Wales to the other to raise funds to pay for them. His colorful use of the Welsh language helped to revive it at a time when the English were discouraging its use.

Catherine died in 1823, however, and there were no children to help soften the blow. From this point on Christmas was often ill, and blindness was always a threat.

Evans ruled his churches with such an iron hand that people called him the bishop of Anglesey. He had, after all, created those churches and won many of their pastors to the faith.

He would, it appears, preside at meetings of various churches and interrupt the speaker with words like, “William, my boy, have done with it,” or, “Richard, hold your tongue.”

Despite his bluntness, people loved him. But as Baptists they also wanted their independence. When they chose their pastors without consulting him, he was heartbroken. A lawsuit about a chapel debt was the last straw.

After more than 30 years of ministry in Anglesey, Evans, now 59, gladly accepted a call to the Baptist chapel in Caerphilly, five miles north of Cardiff in the south of Wales.

While there he had an opportunity to marry a wealthy widow. He chose instead to marry his faithful housekeeper from Anglesey, Mary. She greatly enriched the remaining decade of his life. Though his ministry in Caerphilly was numerically successful, once again his autocratic ways led to “difficulties,” and in September 1828 he moved to a Baptist chapel in Cardiff. The chapel had a very democratic constitution, suggesting that perhaps Evans did not realize how dictatorial he was. He was soon in trouble again.

In 1832, when he was 72, Christmas and Mary rode in a two-wheeled cart down to Tredegar, south to Cardiff, then west to Cowbridge and Neath on a preaching tour to raise funds for the construction of new chapels. After preaching for two hours in Swansea, he felt ill. “That was my last sermon,” he is reported to have said. The follow-

At one moment he had his listeners laughing uproariously and the next moment they would be in tears.

—

The Paraclete

by Christmas Evans

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John 14:16-17).

The Bible is a most wonderful book. It came to us from heaven, and is stamped with the Spirit and the character of heaven. It assails our favorite maxims and customs, and declares that he who will be the friend of this world is the enemy of God. It will consent to no compromise with sin. It will not in the least accommodate itself to the carnal inclinations of the human heart. What is written is written, and not one jot or tittle can be altered till heaven and earth shall pass away.

The secret of all its wonderful qualities is found in its divine inspiration, and the power of the Holy Spirit that accompanies its truths. It is “the sword of the Spirit,” and the Spirit that brought it into the world continues in the world to wield it and render it quick and powerful.

We remark, that the Holy Ghost is evidently not a divine attribute merely, but a divine Person. His personality is proved by the terms applied to Him in the text—the “Comforter,” and “the Spirit of truth.”

The doctrine of His divinity is sustained by so many texts that their mere quotation would be an irrefutable argument in its favor. When Ananias “lied to the Holy Ghost,” it is said he “lied to God.” Every attribute that belongs to the Deity belongs to Him. He is omnipresent, omniscient, and eternal. He is the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of grace, and the Spirit of life. His works also are the works of God. If then, the Father is God, and if the Son is God, so also is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Ghost is the messenger and representative of Jesus Christ in the church. Two promises, like heavenly merchant-vessels, brought salvation to our world. The first was given in Eden, and fulfilled on Calvary. The Son of God descended from heaven, suffered in our stead the curse of the law, spoiled the powers of death and hell, and returned to His Father, leaving another promise, shortly to be fulfilled upon His people. With what supernatural power the Holy Spirit manifested Himself on the Day of Pentecost! Divine Comforter! What treasure bringest Thou in Thy vessel of grace? “The things of Christ; and I will unload them today in the region of Calvary. I have come to fulfill the promise, to endow the disciples with power from on high, and finish the work that the
Son of God has begun.”

See those tongues of flame sitting upon the fishermen of Galilee, while strangers from many different countries hear from them, each in his own language, “the wonderful works of God.” Only think of three thousand conversions in a day—under a single sermon. Three thousand hearts were wounded by the arrows of divine love, through the strongest breastplate ever made in hell. This was the work of the Holy Spirit, taking the things of Christ and showing them to the disciples. It was Christ Himself, manifesting Himself through His agent. The first promise brought the Messiah into the world; the second, in the Spirit—the first, to be crucified, the second, to crucify the sins of His people; the first, to empty Himself, the second, to fill the believer with heavenly gifts and graces; the first, to sanctify Himself as a sin-offering upon the altar, the second, to give repentance and pardon as a Prince and a Saviour.

The Holy Spirit is still on earth. He strives with sinners and quickens believers into spiritual life. He dwells in the saints, leads them into all truth, and bears witness with their spirits that they are the children of God. He illuminates their understanding, subdues their will, purifies their thoughts, and plants within them all holy principles and affections. And this He does, not by an audible voice from heaven, but through the instrumentality of the Word, and by secret impressions upon the soul.

The Holy Ghost is the Paraclete—the Counselor and Consoler. In our text, the Holy Spirit is called the “Comforter,” according to the original, one to plead your cause. The word is the same as that used to designate the Roman ambassadors who were sent to other countries as representatives of the Roman power to persuade enemies to submit, or to offer terms of peace.

One author observes that the office of the Comforter is to reconcile enemies and invigorate friends—to console the dejected, strengthen the enfeebled, and support the people of God in all the conflicts and trials of life.

Another part of His office in the church is intercession. As He pleads with sinners on behalf of Christ in the gospel, so He pleads for believers in the court of heaven.

When other nations had offended the Romans, it was common for Christ in heaven pleads for the reconciliation of sinners to God. The Holy Spirit on earth awakens sinners, convinces them of sin, draws them to the throne of grace, and breathes into them intense prayers for pardon. All the true conversions ever effected on earth are the results of His gracious power.

The Holy Ghost has taken up His permanent residence among the people of God. The Holy Spirit’s miraculous gifts were temporary, being no longer necessary when the truth was established in the conviction of mankind. But His renovating and sanctifying grace is as much needed now as ever, and therefore has never been taken out of the world. The primitive Christians, and Christians of the present day, in this respect, share the same privilege. It is a “common salvation,” and the streams will never cease to flow, while there remain “vessels of mercy” to be filled.

The church in every age has suffered great loss in the death of her most able and efficient ministers. Though safe in heaven, they are lost to earth. But the Holy Spirit is a “Comforter” that shall “abide with you for ever.” The hands have all departed, one after another, and new crews have been shipped from age to age; but the Captain is still alive; and has remained on board, ever since He first took the register and the compass, on the Day of Pentecost; and will never leave the ship, till He brings her in from her last voyage, and lays her up forever!

Brethren in the ministry! This is our consolation. The Spirit that blessed the labors of David Jones, Daniel Rowlands, and Howell Harris, still “dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” O let us seek His aid in our holy work and pray for His outpouring upon our congregations!

The “Comforter” is yet at work. The illuminator of souls is yet at hand. The office is yet open. The blessing is yet offered. O, let us all pray for the Holy Spirit! Let us look for His coming! Let us wait for His salvation!

Adapted from Christmas Evans, Life and Sermons (1854).
Daniel Henderson with his family (from left to right), Rosemary, Heather Rose (7 months), Jordan (3), Justin (5).

LU Spotlight:
Daniel Henderson—“Learned to Lead” at Liberty

Last June, 31-year-old Daniel Henderson accepted the call to pastor the 3,500-member Los Gatos Christian Church in San Jose, California. Perhaps no one was more surprised than he that such a young man had been called to pastor the 104-year-old church. “I didn’t pursue the call to come here, and didn’t even meet the guy who ‘put my name in the hat,’ so to speak, until after I had accepted the call,” he smiles. “But my family and I have been able to see the sovereignty of God in bringing us to this situation.”

Henderson graduated from Liberty University in 1980 and finished his seminary courses in 1983. From Lynchburg he and a team of Liberty graduates left to begin what is now Cornerstone Community Baptist Church in Seattle, currently pastored by LU graduate Don Hargett.

Henderson left Seattle to serve as John MacArthur’s assistant for two years. His duties included overseeing other staff members and MacArthur’s schedule and correspondence, as well as the worship services of Grace Community Church. Six months into his service, Henderson also assumed the position of director of the Master’s Fellowship, which includes the parachurch organizations of the Master’s College and Seminary; the Word of Grace radio, tape, and publications ministries; and the Master’s Mission, a missions program.

While under the influence of John MacArthur, Henderson realized anew the significance of a commonly quoted statement: “If a man will take care of the depth of his ministry, God will take care of the breadth.” He learned the difference between excellence and success. Excellence is demonstrated by the quality of a work; success is demonstrated in quantity.

“Over the years,” says Henderson, “I started focusing on the depth of my life through prayer and a commitment to study of the Word. The Lord has proven Himself faithful. One of the best things about my job is the opportunity to study three days a week. I love it. The staff of the church is large and capable, and I’m able to specialize.”

Henderson loves the people of his church. “They are very optimistic about the future, hungry for the teaching of the Word, and extremely responsive to it.”

Located in the Santa Clara Valley, where 1.5 million people reside, the church’s opportunities for outreach are limitless. Recent statistics indicate that only 7 percent of the population in the area attend a Protestant church of any kind. The church also has a television ministry, and Arbitron reports that at least 123,000 people watch each week. “It’s the only religious program that even rates on the Arbitron scale.” Henderson smiles. “I never expected to be a televangelist.”

Daniel and his wife, Rosemary, have three children: Justin, 5; Jordan, 3; and Heather Rose, 7 months. Daniel has fond memories of his days at Liberty—and a spirit of gratitude. “The training I got at Liberty is a vital part of my being able to fill this role,” he says. “Liberty gave me confidence and an understanding of church ministry, as well as an education in theology and the Bible. I learned to lead during my years at Liberty. Had I not been able to catch it there, I would have been ill-prepared to handle this.” He pauses. “In fact, I probably wouldn’t be here at all.”

Angela E. Hunt

Special Report:

by Daniel Henderson

On Tuesday, October 17, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck the bay area. Los Gatos Christian Church suffered minor damage in the auditorium which was repaired. However, the church became a focal point of relief efforts in the South Bay communities. The weekend following the earthquake, the church mobilized hundreds of people who went to the badly damaged Santa Cruz-Watsonville communities building shelters, delivering food and clothing, and offering practical and spiritual assistance in many capacities. The church also coordinated an area-wide toy drive to collect toys for the children who are living in temporary housing. Thousands of dollars worth of food, clothing, water, and monetary assistance were collected in order to aid the earthquake victims.

It has been edifying to see the body of Christ join together sharing Christian love and support in so many areas. We feel blessed to have had the opportunity to be involved with this operation.
Donna Faircloth: Dedicated to God’s Ministry

“If it had not been for my involvement with LIGHT ministries, I probably would not be headed for the mission field today.” This statement could be made by many individuals currently serving as missionaries or preparing to go to the field, but it has special significance for Donna Faircloth. For the past nine years, first as a student team member and then as campaign coordinator, Donna has been a vital part of evangelistic campaigns conducted by LIGHT Ministries in over 40 countries on five continents.

The most rewarding aspect of Donna’s ministry with LIGHT was working with the many students who participated in the campaigns. She says, “These campaigns were designed as intensive evangelistic thrusts, and as opportunities for Liberty University students to be exposed to another part of God’s great harvest field—to see firsthand how vital a role they can have in reaching people for Jesus Christ.” After participating in a foreign outreach many of these students develop the burden and desire, as Donna did, to return as full-time missionaries. Donna worked excitedly with these students, assisting them as they prepared to go.

She will carry this excitement to her coming ministry in Brazil, South America, where she will work with Brazilian pastor Nilson Fanini and the First Baptist Church of Niteroi. Her ministry will include training Sunday-school teachers, conducting ladies’ Bible studies, and assisting at a medical clinic ministry that is reaching people in a local flavela, or slum district. “These flavelas,” says Donna, “have terrible living conditions, poverty, and heartache. Many children are purposely forced out of their homes and into the streets because parents feel they can no longer care for them.” Donna hopes to work with these families, offering viable alternatives to help strengthen families rather than pull them apart.

Deputation, the time-consuming process whereby missionaries secure the financial support needed to go to the field and ministry to which God has led them, provides a unique difficulty for Donna because she is going as a single missionary. Regrettably, many pastors and churches relegate single missionaries to a secondary level of importance, behind married missionaries, implying that God’s calling is more significant if an individual is married. Donna states that even after overcoming a pastor’s initial concern about her being a young woman headed for a ministry in Brazil, she often gets less time than her married counterparts in presenting her ministry in the church service. However, she is confident in God’s leading and provision to fulfill the goals He has set before her.

Vernon Brewer, director of LIGHT Ministries and vice president of student development at Liberty, is confident of Donna’s determination and ability as an effective missionary. “Her commitment and dedication to the ministry God has called her to has been inspiring,” said Brewer. “Without question, she will approach her ministry in Brazil with the same determination she has expressed over the years working with LIGHT Ministries.”

Howard Erickson

Photo by Howard Erickson

The most rewarding aspect of Donna’s ministry with LIGHT was working with the many students who participated in the campaigns.
LU Football Comes Home to the Willard May Stadium

On Homecoming Weekend 1989, 12,750 people attended the first football game ever played at the Willard May Stadium on the Liberty University campus. This was the largest crowd ever to watch an LU home game.

The field itself was almost completed. Ninety percent of the sand had been filled in. The field has a 1½-inch rubber base under 1 inch of artificial turf. The artificial turf is then filled halfway with sand. “My understanding is that this field is a relatively new concept, supposedly the ‘Cadillac’ of field design. The players feel like they are running on natural grass,” said Gary McCullough, project engineer for the building contractors, McDevitt and Street.

Although Liberty University was allowed to open the stadium for the Homecoming game, several aspects were not yet complete, due to an unusual amount of summer rain. Facilities such as the press box and locker rooms are now being completed. “This is such a gorgeous setting for both the players and fans,” Flames coach Sam Rutigliano said after the game. “I think the players were just overwhelmed by the situation. When everything is finished the stadium will be a truly marvelous facility.”

Living Christmas Tree Performances Begin

If you don’t have them already, you need to get your tickets to the 1989 Living Christmas Tree now.

This year’s performance is based on an original story by Robbie Hiner who also wrote the title song, “A Song Reborn.” Directed by David Randlett, the eight performances are scheduled: Saturday, December 2, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Sunday, December 3, 6 p.m.; Friday, December 8, 7 p.m.; Saturday, December 9, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Sunday, December 10, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Reserved seating is $5 per person (general admission $3). For reservations call (800) 538-8585.

Miss Liberty 1989-1990 Is Chosen

Kristen Joy Parker, a senior from San Diego, California, was crowned Miss Liberty 1989-1990 during Liberty University’s 12th annual pageant. The 21-year-old accounting major was chosen from a group of 24 girls. Judging was based on personality, college involvement, achievements, academic ability, Christian testimony, Christian service, ambition, and appearance.

Kristen said her goals are “to excel either as a wife and mother, or in a career as a certified public accountant, and to always be involved in serving others and Christ through the church, government, and community.”
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IN REVIEW

SILVER BOXES
by Florence Littauer

We live in a negative world, yet as Christians we are admonished in Scripture to “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 4:29; 5:19). Knowing what the Bible teaches is one thing, but living it out in our daily lives is the real challenge. Florence Littauer focuses on the practical application of these verses in Silver Boxes.

Caught in a situation of having to give a Bible lesson to children, something she had never attempted previously, Florence found the children teaching her. As one child eloquently expressed, “What she means is that our words should be like little silver boxes with bows on top.” Thus, what was a sermon to children became a book for all.

Those seeking to develop the gift of encouragement will find Silver Boxes a helpful guide (Word Publishing, 154 pp., $12.99).

Pauline Donaldson

Booknotes

MIRACLES STILL HAPPEN
by Richard Lee

A little boy asked his Sunday-school teacher why miracles do not happen today. The teacher was not sure how to answer her young student. Do miracles still happen today? Richard Lee, senior pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church in Atlanta, would answer this little boy’s question with a firm yes! In Miracles Still Happen Lee offers the reader 13 practical Bible studies of 13 great miracles in the Bible. He applies the principles learned in them to the modern believer. He explains how today’s Christians can experience “divine interruptions into the normal course of history.” Each one of the Bible studies revolves around a well-known miracle in the Bible. Lee surrounds these miracles with practical applications, humorous anecdotes, and entertaining illustrations. Reading this book is much like reading a devotional guide. It is uplifting and stirs the emotions. The heartwarming exhortations will leave the reader feeling strengthened, enriched, and sure that he too can experience unique miracles in his own life. This book will uplift the reader from the first page right through to the last word (Word Books, 172 pp., $12.99).

Terry Dorsett

UNDERSTANDING THE DEEPER LIFE
by Elmer Towns

In a time of much confusion among Christians regarding what is commonly called the “spiritual life,” with its implications and manifestations, Elmer Towns has written this book to give scriptural wisdom and discernment about what is true and false.

What about trances, visions, “signs and wonders,” and other claimed evidences of the fully Christian life? What is it to be filled with the Holy Spirit? To be sanctified? How is one to reckon with the vari-

An excerpt from SILVER BOXES

Humanly speaking, my kind of personality likes to get credit for doing good works. I’ve always been the caretaker of people who needed help and have never hesitated to jump in quickly and administer emotional first aid. I always assumed it was natural to desire accolades for such sacrificial dedication, and I usually got them. When I first started studying the Bible seriously and began to apply the principles to my everyday life, I was stopped in my little spiritual tracks by a verse in the Good News Bible. “When you help a needy person, do it in such a way that even your closest friend will not know about it” (Matthew 6:3, TEV).

That command seemed like an impossibility to me at the time. I was a great giver of silver boxes, but I wanted you to open my shiny presents in front of a party full of people and give praises unto my name.

The next verse went on to say: “Then it will be a private matter. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you” (Matthew 6:4, TEV).

This spiritual principle was so foreign to my nature at the time that I had to pray about even the possibility I could give secretly. To make my philanthropies private matters and go on the chance that God would mysteriously reward me at some future time was completely out of character for me. God convicted me of this desire for my life, so I did what I always do: I began to teach it to others letting them know that I was in the process of making this real in my own life.
ous perspectives on the nature and source of Christian experience? Towns handles these and other crucial questions and their biblical answers fairly, but decisively and biblically, with excellent examples from church history (Fleming H. Revell Company, 252 pp., $12.95).  

John Morrison

HE WALKED AMONG US  
by Josh McDowell & Bill Wilson

Josh McDowell and Bill Wilson have done a massive amount of research on the life of Jesus for this book. Asking, “How do we know Jesus ever lived?” the authors evaluate references to Him in secular and Jewish literature and in the writings of the church fathers, Apocrypha, and pseudepigrapha. They then show that the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ life are historically reliable.

Almost every page is packed with information about New Testament backgrounds or first- and second-century writings. Among other things this book shows why ancient secular Roman writings contain so few references to Jesus, what Jewish rabbis and Roman historians thought of Jesus and His disciples, why the results of most “higher criticism” cannot be trusted, how Christianity was radically different from cults and religions of the first century, why Luke and other New Testament historians did not make mistakes in their accounts, and why Jesus’ claims to resurrection and divinity are historically believable.

He Walked Among Us provides practical answers for believers about their faith and motivates us to proclaim the realities of Christianity to a skeptical world (Here’s Life Publishers, 365 pp., $10.95).  

Wayne Brindle

REFLECTIONS ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN—VOL. 4  
by Leon Morris


He concentrates on a theological and historical understanding of the details of the gospel. There are no footnotes, no indexes, and no bibliography. Each chapter of 8 to 10 pages covers about 5 to 10 verses. Morris’s comments are always insightful and based on solid research, as evidenced in his earlier major commentary on John.

This book would make an excellent resource for a Sunday-school teacher or for a pastor preaching through John. Presumably the present four volumes will soon be combined into one by the publisher (Baker Book House, 750 pp., $8.95).  

Wayne A. Brindle

Introducing the Preaching the Word Series—an ideal resource for pastors and teachers, and for personal Bible study. Each volume is written by Dr. R. Kent Hughes and is noted for clear exposition, fresh insight, and practical application.

“Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Lloyd-Jones . . . Kent Hughes stands in this great tradition,” Dr. J. I. Packer.

“A pleasure to commend . . . ,” Dr. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

“This series will minister to a pastor’s soul [and give] him an immense resource for his preaching. And it will minister to the parishioner wonderfully in personal Bible study,” Dr. Kenneth N. Taylor.

Now available: Colossians, $10.95; Mark, Vol. I, and II, $11.95 each

All who want to improve their preaching will find Learning to Preach Like Jesus to be a tremendously helpful book. With an in-depth look at Jesus’ own message and methods, Dr. Ralph Lewis shows how Jesus’ first-century preaching style is ideally suited to the challenges of twenty-first-century communication. Includes numerous practical examples and illustrations. $8.95.
Casting All Your Care upon Him

There had been a lot of talk around our house about the Lord Jesus' return, and I was frankly curious about what my children knew. "Taryn," I called to my 5-year-old one night as we drove home from church, "do you know what will happen when Jesus comes back?"

"Oh yes," she assured me. "We will go to be with Him in heaven."

"That's right," I smiled. "Everyone who loves Jesus will fly through the sky and go to be with Him."

After our thanksgiving prayer at lunch the next afternoon, my 4-year-old wore a worried frown. "Mommy," he asked, "will you hold my hand when we fly with Jesus?"

I was surprised. "Why, yes, son, if I'm able, I'll hold your hand." I knelt down to his level. "But if Mommy's not around, someone will hold your hand—maybe even Jesus."

He was not content to rest in my answer; he had other fears. He looked up at the ceiling,
must often smile at our fears. Like a loving parent with endless patience, He takes our cares when we draw close to Him. He has everything under control.

I Angela E. Hunt

I frowned. "Mommy, won't I hurt my head?" I laughed in spite of myself. "No, son, the ceiling won't hurt you. It will happen so quickly that you won't even realize you have gone through the roof." How could I explain the transformed body? "You'll be stronger than Superboy.

As I hugged him and murmured that all would be well when the time came, I smiled at his worries. His concern about details was blinding him to the joy of eternal life with Jesus. How often are we like little children, crying to God, "But God, who will feed me today? What if I'm in an accident? How will we get through this problem?" Surely God must often smile at our fears.

Like a loving parent with endless patience, He takes our cares when we draw close to Him. He has everything under control.

I Carol Johnson

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

(Matt. 2:1-2)
Through the Eyes of a Child

On December 23 at 8 a.m., 6-year-old Mary Johnson sprang out of bed and ran downstairs. Entering the kitchen, she saw her mother, Alma, sitting at the table. Breathlessly Mary exclaimed, "We better get bithy."

Alma cringed. Mary had been "bithy" for weeks, making paper Christmas trees, bells, snowflakes, and a multicolored countdown chain whose disappearing links were a constant reminder of how many days remained until the Lord's Birthday. Now Alma suspected that her daughter was ready to bake the 8-inch-tall gingerbread men. They had baked them every Christmas since Mary was 2, but this year Alma had hoped to cut them out of her overcrowded schedule.

Cautiously, Alma said, "Get busy?"

"Yeth. We have to bithy them. They are too small."

"We'll have to skip the gingerbread men," Alma said. "You know Daddy's side of the family is coming for Christmas dinner. There isn't enough time."

Mary's mouth opened with a small gasp and her huge blue eyes stared in unbelief. "Thkip them? We can't bithy them. You know I promithed one to all my friendth and cousinth."

Alma remembered the promises all too well. Several times during the past year, Mary had described in detail how each of the numerous gingerbread men would look when completed. Alma knew that in Mary's mind each cookie man was a bright reality.

"Well, Mary said, "you heard what the radio man thaid."

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Alma sat still for a moment, trying to think of a way to change the subject. "Why don't you turn on the radio?" she said. "You can listen to carols while you make some more decorations."

Suddenly there was a fit of static on the radio, and the disc jockey said, "Remember, folks, if you don't see Christmas through the eyes of the little ones, you won't see Christmas at all."

He played "Away in a Manger."

"Well," Mary said, "you heard what the radio man thaid." She formed a sweetly condescending smile. "And donethn't that little carol make you feel like baking gingerbread men?"

The sight of that toothless gap in the tear-stained face was too much. "Oh, all right," Alma said. "We will bake a double recipe and that's all."

Mary bounced ecstatically and hugged her mother. "Thank you!"

As mother and daughter worked together to create the gingerbread men, Alma felt relaxed. Her schedule no longer seemed so hectic. Glancing outside, she saw a white lacy curtain of precipitation.

"It is snowing, Mary."

"It's the pretty," Mary said, going to the window. "Mother! Come quick."

Alma hurried to the window to see Mary pointing to a large snowflake that clung to one of the small panes. "It's just like the snowflake hanging in my room."

"Mary, are you saying that God made a copy of your snowflake?"

"Of courth He did. Who elth could have done it?"

Alma smiled as she recalled what the disc jockey had said about seeing Christmas through the eyes of children. She contemplated the masses of snowflakes huddled in the corners of
the crosspieces. The window was becoming a full-fledged symbol of the holy season.

Alma returned to the counter and finished rolling out the cookies. When Mary climbed back onto the stool, her mother handed her the cookie pattern and said, "Start cutting." Mary sank the cutter into the lake of batter and held it down firmly. After Mary cut the cookies, her mother moved them all to the baking sheet without breaking a single one. By the time they rolled and cut another panful, the first cookies were ready to be removed from the oven. They smelled heavenly. Alma loosened them with a spatula and slid them onto the counter. Mary drew a faceless gingerbread man toward her and said, "Thith one ith Jeremy'th." As Mary picked up the orange frosting tube, Alma recalled that Jeremy had requested that color several months ago.

Mary looked at the gingerbread man affectionately and said, "Don't worry honey, your thmile ith in thith little tube."

Last year Mary had decided that she was ready to do the decorating without any assistance. This premature declaration of independence had resulted in some very unsightly cookie men. The ornamental atrocities consisted of eyes that were too far apart, too close together, too high, too low, or missing; the smiles had been upside down, hopelessly distorted, or missing; the coats, buttons, and booties were usually forgotten altogether. Nevertheless, these fantasyland victims passed the test of giving and receiving. On Gingerbread Man Judgment Day, the recipients had thought them absolutely perfect.

This Christmas the pint-sized souls would again be satisfied. Mary's current work on Jeremy's cookie man was "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Jeremy's gift was nearing completion. Mary added a mass of orange curls, and last of all the smile.

"Ithn't he beautiful?"

"He's perfect."

There was a muffled knock at the kitchen door. They both knew the visitor was 6-year-old Jeremy. No other human being knocked exactly like that. As Mary walked toward the door, she sealed Jeremy's gift in transparent wrap. At first the covering hissed and crackled like a small forest fire. Then, suddenly, it was as quiet as the faceless gingerbread men, as quiet as the snowflakes that clung to the panes.

"I wonder why Jeremy is here now. He usually comes over much later in the day," mused Alma.

"I told him to come over this morning because that was when his gingerbread man would be ready."

Alma was more puzzled than ever. She listened numbly to a soft refrain that floated out of the radio: "What child is this, who laid to rest..."

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Phyllis, why are you using so much purple paint?"

"Well, I'm coordinating my camel with his wise man."

"Now I've heard of everything-coordinated wise men and camels."

"Yes, they are all in shades of purple, lavender, magenta, and lime green."

"What colors are you going to paint the shepherds?"

"They will be done in reds, yellows, and oranges."

"All coordinated, I suppose?"

"Right again. But I don't know what to do with Mary. Everyone paints her blue, and blue doesn't go with my living room."

As I sat and thought about my beautiful nativity set, I could hardly wait to get it finished. It would be so pretty. I had worked on it for almost a year. I was even thinking about buying a piece of velvet on which to

Dressing Up the Nativity
FAMILY LIVING

One day during my devotions I pondered the birth of Christ and its setting. He was not born in a beautiful place with coordinated colors. No one set Him and the shepherds in assigned spots and told them not to move. They were not beautiful or clean, and maybe they didn’t even all wear smiles.

I wept. Never before had I been struck by the reality of the situation. I had not wanted His birth to be lower than mine—so instead I made His surroundings as glamorous and adventuresome as I could. By getting carried away, I had lost the meaning of His birth.

I had lost sight of God coming to earth in a smelly stable. Very seldom is hay sweet-smelling and soft. Often it is damp and usually pricks the skin. The thought never crossed my mind that there was probably animal manure casting its aroma around.

My visions of the Nativity held rustic visions of white, fluffy sheep and beautifully brushed cows. In my mind, it had all seemed like a neat experience for Mary and Joseph.

Oh God, forgive me for refusing to see the full extent of what it meant for You to leave heaven and come to earth. Help me not to impose my middle-class values on You. Instead, give me just a glimpse of the real Nativity, so I can more fully appreciate your love for me.

Phyllis Dolislager

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Family Bookshelf

A Precious Moments Christmas by Sam Butcher. Sam Butcher has created another keepsake in *A Precious Moments Christmas*. Illustrated in delicate colors, the precious moments of the holiday season come to life in the pages of this special gift book. With lilting rhymes it tells of the joys of giving and sharing, of “sleigh bells, trees, and Christmas lights,” and most importantly the true meaning of Christmas: “a time to share the love of Jesus everywhere.” (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 48 pp., $9.95).

Connie Schofer

The Shiny Red Sled by Barbara Davoll, illustrated by Dennis Hocker man. Christopher and his little friends enjoy a day of sledding in the snow. Later, when Christopher’s cousin Ted borrows his shiny red sled and scratches it, Christopher gets mad at him and holds a grudge. But when Ted gets hurt and is unable to walk home, Christopher uses his sled to help him, and learns a lesson—“Be gentle and ready to forgive; never hold grudges. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others” (Col. 3:13).

All the books in the “Christopher Chur rhouse Classics” are delightful. More importantly, they teach children moral values based on the Word of God (Victor Books, $5.95 book, $8.95 book/cassette package).

CS

Psalty’s Christmas Calamity, produced by Ernie Rettino and Debby Kerner. In today’s materialistic world, children often forget the real meaning of Christmas. They get so wrapped up in buying and receiving gifts and going to parties that they do not realize Christmas is really a time for love. *Psalty’s Christmas Calamity* is a musical, reminding both children and adults that Christmas is a time to show love to those around us. It also teaches the powerful truth that Christians are to trust God to fix our problems, instead of trusting our own efforts or abilities. The musical does involve an extreme amount of choreography, but when put together it is worth all the effort. This tape is a must for parents wanting their children to understand what Christmas is about and for choir directors looking for a different approach to presenting the Christmas message.

Psalty’s Family Christmas Sing-A-long. Memories of families singing together around the piano are all but lost in our hustle and bustle world of dual career homes and latchkey children. But every family needs to spend time together having fun and enjoying each other’s company. *Psalty’s Family Christmas Sing-A-long* provides just such a refreshing opportunity. The 17 lighthearted and surprisingly different Christmas songs on this album will provide many hours of enjoyment for the entire family. The Christmas story is woven throughout each song. This tape should be high on the family Christmas list. Children and adults alike will profit from singing along with Psalty and his friends (Maranatha! Music, $9.98 cassette or album).

Terry Dorsett

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When I got the nativity set home, I displayed it in the best spot. This home kept the right meaning of Christmas—there was no doubt about that. Everyone commented on the beauty of my nativity. My boys were very careful around it and enjoyed looking at it. Sometimes I walked into the living room just to gaze at the pretty colors. I was glad I had coordinated the colors of the camels with the wise men.

One day during my devotions I pondered the birth of Christ and its setting. He was not born in a beautiful place with coordinated colors. No one set Him and the shepherds in assigned spots and told them not to move. They were not beautiful or clean, and maybe they didn’t even all wear smiles.

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Phyllis Dolislager
PROFILE

Pat Williams
Winning at Home and at Work

The rumblings down in central Florida this year are not due to a hurricane, Disney World, or the steady stream of tourists. They are caused by the Orlando Magic, the National Basketball Association's newest team.

The Magic is the dream of one man, Pat Williams. Pat is many things: the father of 12, president and general manager of the Orlando Magic, a best-selling author, former manager of the Philadelphia 76ers (at 29 he was the youngest general manager in the history of professional sports), and a former professional baseball player. He is also a devout Christian man who realized one day that his marriage had died.

On Sunday, December 19, 1982, Pat realized his wife, Jill, was a walking corpse. As they write in their book, Rekindled (Revell, 1985):

"I just don't care anymore," she said, so quietly he almost couldn't hear her. Almost. 'I hate this marriage. It's boring me to death.' He heard that as if she'd screamed it in his ear, yet she spoke just above a whisper, staring at the floor. Pat leaned close to look in her face, realizing that she meant it, that her eyes and even her color signaled something in her he had never encountered. This wasn't something he could apologize away, something he could patch up ...

"I realized then I had a major crisis on the home front," Williams explained recently. "I had a wife who had died emotionally. She did not care, and at that point I realized that for 10 years, through doing this, that, and the other, I had caused it. It wasn't unfaithfulness or abuse or financial lethargy that had caused the problem, but dozens and dozens of little things that had built up."

Among the little things were inattention, business, and a lack of affection. Also, even though the Williamses had three children, Jill had always wanted to adopt an Oriental baby. To Pat the idea seemed ludicrous, and whenever Jill mentioned adoption he summarily dismissed it.

With all the fervor and devotion that comes naturally to him in the professional sports arena, Pat Williams set about to revive and renew his marriage. It took time, effort, and determination, but through the principles espoused in Ed Wheat's book, Love Life for Every Married Couple (Zondervan, 1980) Pat learned how to actively love his wife. He also agreed to consider international adoption. In September 1983 Pat and Jill welcomed two little girls from South Korea. In May 1987 Korean brothers joined the Williams clan. In between adoptions, Michael was born into the family.

When asked what has given him the most pleasure in the past year, Williams reflects and comes up with a sure answer, the arrival of new children to the family—four brothers from the Philippines. There are now 12 children in the Williams family: Jimmy, 15; Bobby, 12; David, 10; Karyn, 10; Peter, 9; Brian, 8; Sarah, 8; the twins Thomas and Stephen, 8; Andrea, 8; Sammy, 5; and Michael, 5.

For relaxation the family goes to the beach when they can get away, which is not often. Pat is very involved with basketball, writes books regularly, and is often sought after as a motivational speaker. Jill not only mothers 12 kids, but breeds birds and has earned her real estate license. The kids are involved in school, Little League games, and drama classes.

"We're all on a very fast track and our lives are complicated with activity," admits Williams. "But my favorite activity is playing baseball with my kids. We have nine boys, so if we're given three or four hours of free time we'll be out playing baseball."

In all that activity most people

by Angela Elwell Hunt

With nine boys and three girls the Williams's family time is at a premium. A friendly game of baseball is a favorite activity.
The rumblings down in central Florida are caused by the Orlando Magic, the National Basketball Association's newest team and the dream of one man, Pat Williams. Williams might go a little crazy, but Williams relishes the fast-paced life. He is disciplined: regular running, Bible study, and push-ups are a part of every day. He dislikes time-wasting activities, and if you call the Orlando Magic and ask for Pat Williams, you will not spend 10 minutes being shuffled from secretary to secretary. You will talk to Pat.

How does he do it all? “Time management is the key,” he says. “I’m not a fisherman or a golfer, and every minute is devoted to something important. I do run every morning because keeping fit is important, and I spend time in the Word every day. You’ve just got to make it happen. I think if you concentrate and don’t waste time, it is there every day. The television has to stay off, of course, and I can save an hour by eating lunch at my desk.”

With such a busy schedule, how does he ensure that his marriage and family relationships remain healthy? “It’s a huge assignment,” he admits, “and something that has to be constantly checked. I do everything I can. Jill and I have a weekly date. We take walks around the block and grab time each day for uninterrupted conversation.

“The hardest thing is trying to arrange weekends away. It’s hard to get a baby-sitter for 12 children. But I’ve learned that Jill, like every woman, longs for romance. Men, by nature, are not romantic. In fact, we’re rather clodish. But romance is the key.”

The best thing about his job in professional sports, he says, is the sheer excitement. “There’s no boredom. It’s not rote. Every day brings a new adventure. I’ve been in professional sports for 27 years, and every morning I can’t wait to get to the office. I’m grateful for that, because that’s not how it is for a lot of people.”

His kind of excitement would translate into high risk and uncertainty for most people. How many people would leave a secure job with the 76ers to move to Florida, a place known primarily for retirees, mosquitoes, and Mickey Mouse? Who could say that the NBA would grant a franchise for a Florida team? What if the franchise were granted? Could a team be put together from free agents and released professional players? If the team were formed, could they fill a stadium? Finally, could the Orlando Magic beat the odds and see a winning season?

“I needed a big adventure,” smiles Williams. “I had spent 12 years in Philadelphia and I was restless. I think I’ve always been more stimulated in building situations rather than in maintaining ones. Coming here would be the ultimate building adventure. I think God put a restlessness within me. I was captivated by the potential of central Florida, and I could see that things were stirring here.”

The Orlando Magic is still an adventure. The fledgling team is being melded and molded and will be for years to come. The excitement of receiving the franchise and choosing players has been exhilarating. Nothing seems to discourage Williams, but he laughingly points out that “four or five losses in a row can discourage you pretty quickly.”

When things become trying Williams remembers his favorite words of wisdom from C.S. Lewis. “Relying on God must begin every day as if you had never done it before.”

“With the mass of responsibilities I have—a complex family situation; writing, which has opened ministry with hurting marriages; speaking opportunities, and so on, I’ve got to recognize each day that I cannot make it without the power of the Lord freshly bubbling in my life. It doesn’t carry over from one day to the next. I need a fresh source of His power every day. I have to lean on Him, study and memorize His Word, and communicate with Him through prayer. That focuses me on my total reliance on Him.”

This work style is very different from the take-charge dynamo he used to be in younger days. Before he became a Christian Williams was driven to achieve, out-sell and out-perform his competition. Zealous for excellence, he achieved his goals and accomplished both the mundane and the miraculous with flair and verve, but at the conclusion of every challenge the then 27-year-old Williams felt empty and subtly cheated.

“I had such success as a young man,” he recalls, “and it wasn’t really satisfying. I tried everything. In spite of all these good things a void still remained. That was very frustrating. I just didn’t know where to turn next. Nothing was working—pleasure, trophies, newspaper clippings, awards, fortune, fame—nothing worked. So as my great lifelong game plan was being dashed on the shores, the claims of Christ were presented to me. I didn’t realize it then, but I was like well-tilled soil, ready to receive the truth.”

R.E. Littlejohn, owner of the Phillies farm club in Spartanburg, South Carolina, had the most profound impact on Williams’s decision to accept Christ. “He was a wise, kind, and loving man who taught

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me principles of life and business. As I look back I realize he was the man God used to make the biggest difference in my life. Much of what has happened to me probably wouldn’t have happened were it not for my time with him."

Pat has had the greatest of success in the sports world, and if the Orlando Magic does as well as expected, his success will continue. His home and marriage have not only been rekindled, they are flaming tributes of what Christian homes can and should be.

How does Pat Williams measure his success? “I think you measure that by achieving in a godly fashion the utmost in those areas where you have interest and skill—the results not being of prime importance, but achieving to your maximum capabilities. Success involves dreams, goal-setting, hard work, pushing on through adversity, never giving up, and trusting God totally.”

Comments continued from page 9

to raise would be “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32). This child would also be his Saviour.

In Jesus, God became man that He might die for our sins, and thus be our Saviour. Jesus and His birth are more than an enchanting story, more than a holiday fantasy. He is the Son of God who came to provide forgiveness for our sins.

Christmas, for all of us, is filled with tradition, gifts, activity, and thousands of messages competing for our attention. Every ad agency in America tries to define Christmas for us in terms of its own products or services. Not surprisingly, we can get sidetracked from the real meaning of Christmas. We need to be reminded again of the old, old story.

Your personal faith in Jesus as the Son of God can make Christmas very special this year. Let me encourage you, in the middle of all the good and wholesome things you do this holiday season, to reflect on what it all really means. Take a few moments with your family on Christmas Eve and join millions who will read aloud the old story from Luke chapter 2.
Ministering to the Minister

by Clyde M. Narramore, Christian Psychologist

Did you ever wish your church members would minister to you? Then you may want to share the following list of suggestions in a bulletin or newsletter to your congregation.

How can a church member minister to his minister?

Grow spiritually. Perhaps the most important thing you can do for your pastor is to grow into a dedicated, committed Christian. Put yourself in his place. Just as a coach wants to see his team healthy, so your pastor longs to see every church member in the best possible spiritual shape.

A place of love. Another way to help your pastor is to love other members of your church. This means overlooking their faults and accepting them for what they are rather than criticizing them for what they are not. The Bible says, “By love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

Minister to each other. Because the pastor is only one person, there are only so many things he can do himself. How about visiting the hospital, preparing a meal, inviting someone over for an evening when he is alone or new to the church? Your pastor is encouraged when members minister to each other.

Take responsibility. Any leader is happy when people in his organization step out and take responsibility. Have you considered offering your talents to help tape the message? Would you offer to drive a church bus? Or get involved in a prison ministry? A thriving, growing church is filled with participating people, not spectators. Indeed, this is how you can help your pastor.

The pastor’s family. Is there anything special you can do for the pastor’s family? Pastors get so caught up in serving others, they sometimes do not have time for their families. Maybe you are mechanically inclined or have specific skills. Because a pastor’s time with his family is so precious, you must not bother him at home unnecessarily. If you have a problem to discuss or some good news to share wait until office hours.

Regular encouragement. Share your heart with the pastor. If his messages are a blessing, tell him so. Send him cards and notes telling him how much you appreciate him. Leaders need encouragement, so encourage your pastor regularly.

Criticism. The last thing a pastor needs is people in his congregation who criticize him. Continually finding fault with the pastor often indicates that the criticizer is a negative, hostile person—maybe harboring anger (perhaps toward an unkind parent in his childhood). So he takes it out on the pastor.

Prayer. Do you pray for your pastor each day? Nothing helps your pastor more than prayer. It changes him and changes you!

Pastors: For free unabridged copies of this article, write or call Dr. Clyde Narramore, Box 5000, Rosemead, California 91770, (818) 288-7000.

Prison Ministry

Part 1—The Need

The average churchgoer has probably never seen the inside of a correctional facility or prison. Fewer still are aware of the needs of prisoners and their families. And only a few of those ever do anything about the needs.

Even the smallest church can become involved at some level of service and make a difference in those hurting lives. The key to a successful prison ministry is faithful work within the resources of the church. Just as in any other mission field, the souls of men and women are at stake.

Sometimes a person becomes involved in a prison ministry as the result of knowing someone who works with a prison outreach. June Martin of Lynchburg, Virginia, had sung with her family for years. In addition, her goal was to
work with substance abuse in teens and adults. But her interest in prison work came through attending a prison church service with Liberty Prison Outreach secretary Chris Harvey.

Others feel that the prison ministry offers preparation for future church work. Liberty University pastoral major and Little Rock, Arkansas, native Timothy King never considered prison work before he attended college. As a Christian Service worker, he visits the Bedford County Jail every Thursday.

Why did he choose prison outreach? “I wanted to be in on the pioneering, frontline work,” he said.

The experience to be gained from the prison outreach is the reason Alma Babson from Blue Hill, Maine, enjoys participating in prison church services. She hopes to operate a girls home one day. Recognizing the similarities between the needs of inmates and troubled girls, she said, “I’m definitely going to need to know how to relate.”

Volunteers need no special individual or professional qualifications. “They just need a desire to serve the Lord,” Garry Sims, LPO director, said. “They need a willingness to give their time and talents to serve in a prison outreach.”

Church groups wishing to be involved should study the needs of the facilities in their areas. To help you in your prison ministry, we will discuss different areas of service in the next few issues.

Everyone likes to receive Christmas cards. So why not use this season to raise money for your youth group? Instead of church members mailing Christmas cards to each other, use the youth to deliver their cards right at church.

Here is how it works. Decorate a drop-off box for cards. Charge 10 to 25 cents for each card to be delivered. (Otherwise they would have to pay the U.S. Postal Service.) Appoint one of the youth as treasurer, and have him arrive early and stay late after church to handle the money. Appoint other young people to deliver the cards before and after church. They enjoy having something to do, and delivering the cards helps them get to know other members in the church—especially if your church is large or has new members. Start this project the first of December to catch members before they go out of town for the holidays. Use the money you collect to help a needy family or to sponsor an underprivileged youth to attend a winter retreat.

The Wall Street Journal rates it as the poorest city in America, but Ford Heights, a suburb of Chicago, is home to 29-year-old Scott Reese. There he pastors New Life Baptist Church, a three-year-old church of 100.

The roots of New Life Baptist Church go back 10 years to an after-school basketball game. Scott, son of Ed and Margaret Reese (Ed Reese authored Reese’s Chronological Bible), began playing ball with the kids in his high school, and the church grew from there.
school. After the ball game he invited them to his home and started a Bible club in his living room. Before long the living room was packed, and Scott formed four additional Bible clubs to meet the needs of youths in other communities.

Scott continued the Bible clubs while he attended college and as he worked after graduation as a Christian school counselor. Finding his schedule too full to continue to oversee five Bible clubs, he dropped out of all but the Ford Heights club. Soon he felt the Lord leading him to establish something permanent in the area. "The Lord just laid on my heart the need for inner-city work," he explains. "The inner city is overlooked by most Bible college graduates, and I felt led to minister there."

The Bible club and youth groups needed a meeting place. One night as Scott took some kids home he found himself standing outside a storefront tavern with an upstairs apartment. A man with a gun stood and pointed it at Scott. "If you come back here again," he threatened, "I'll shoot you." It was not the first time Scott Reese had looked down the barrel of a gun.

A few months later the mayor's son was murdered outside the tavern and the business subsequently lost its license. Scott rented the building for youth programs until it burned years later.

Today, with his unlined face and dark hair and eyes, Scott Reese looks too young and innocent to be an insider of the inner city. But every day, he meets people like Estelle, who told him, "I don't want to live! Last night I took an overdose of drugs and I wanted so bad to die. I don't know why I'm alive today."

"She honestly thought no one cared," says Scott. "Her family treated her with disrespect, and I later found out she was chained to the bottle. As I looked into her eyes and sensed her deep hurt and loneliness, my heart broke. I told her there was a purpose for her life, and I could introduce her to a Friend who deeply loved her and would never leave her. Today she is a faithful member of my church."

Now the church is renting a church building in Chicago Heights and over 100 young people come out each week for youth programs, basketball leagues, and Bible studies. Ninety-five percent of those involved are black.

Is it difficult for a white man to pastor a black church? "Not really," says Reese. "The most important thing is the compassion in the heart, not the color of the skin. I haven't had much difficulty in that area."

He has been organizing youth activities for 10 years, and pastoring the church for 3, but only in August 1988 was Reese able to become a full-time pastor. His salary is supported by others; he is considered an inner-city missionary. "Inner-city ministry has been an overlooked mission field," Reese says. "Just as churches support mission work in foreign nations, they ought to consider helping inner-city work. There's a real need."

There is also a real need for prayer. Reese needs prayer for strength, financial resources, and safety. Churches and Christians must become aware that such a ministry exists. "I have a real burden to raise the consciousness for inner-city ministries," says Reese. "They need outside help, and churches should not overlook the mission field at their own doorstep. I also have a burden to help inspire people to go into inner-city ministry. It is filled with many pressures—financial, safety, unstable people—but it can be very rewarding. I can't think of a better opportunity to truly minister."

His work is not without its frustrations. Two of his converts have been murdered; 1 out of 30 black men in Chicago will be murdered. The temptations of the city provide other frustrations. "Sometimes people you work with for a long time will fall away," Reese says. "They are surrounded by so many temptations. It is easy for them to fall back into the world."

But there is pleasure. One young man, Barry Jones, was converted in Ford Heights and is currently a full-time inner-city missionary to New York City.

It all began with a school boy with a basketball and compassion for the lost.

Angela E. Hunt. For more information on this inner-city ministry, write to New Life Ministries, Box 796, Glenwood, Illinois 60425-0796.
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Supreme Court Invites Rudolph to the Manger

Planning on sponsoring a manger scene at your local city park? Would your neighbors like to see a Jewish menorah gleaming next to the traditional creche in front of the county courthouse? Unless you invite Santa and his reindeer along, and throw in a few candy canes, too, your plans will not get past a July 1989 Supreme Court ruling.

Early in 1988, in response to a suit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union and a group of private citizens, the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals put a stop to a seasonal Nativity scene that had been erected by a Catholic group in front of the Allegheny County Courthouse for seven years. The court also banned an 18-foot menorah display located a block away in front of the Pittsburgh City-County building. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court.

In July 1989 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the menorah display was constitutional because it was placed next to a Christmas tree, but the Catholic-sponsored creche one block away was not. The dissenting justices who would have allowed the creche are Anthony Kennedy, Antonin Scalia, Byron White, and Chief Justice William Rehnquist. In his written dissent, Justice Kennedy wrote that the majority ruling reflected "an unjustified hostility toward religion."

Does the Court hate Christmas? Your answer will depend on your perspective, but note that in this situation the Court is not seeking to ban religious symbols from public property, but to dress religion in the robes of tradition and folklore. In 1984 the justices of the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of a Pawtucket, Rhode Island, creche in a display that included reindeer, Santa's house, and candy-striped poles. If, says the Court, the display has a "secular purpose" and "effect," Baby Jesus is OK. "Apparently," wrote TIME reporter Richard Ostling of the 1989 decision, "the Pittsburgh creche did not have enough secular camouflage."

So, Baby Jesus can be displayed among the mythological Santa and his elves, but there is no room for Him alone on public property. Just how many secular trappings are necessary before a Nativity scene is legal? The issue is murky. Three federal
Appellate panels have held that creches not “subsumed by a larger display” of secular items are not permissible on public property. At best, any city solicitor or parks commissioner who decides on the legality of a creche display is making a judgment call.

For several years Western and Southern Life Insurance Company has sponsored a handsome and detailed creche on the grounds of the Krohn Conservatory in Cincinnati, Ohio. Each year the application comes to the Park Board and is routinely approved, but in 1989 the application was approved pending the Supreme Court decision.

After the Court’s July decision the application was denied. Western and Southern Life made certain modifications, says Jan Seidel, community relations coordinator for the Cincinnati Park Board, and the application for the creche was accepted.

What modifications were necessary? “There will be some changes in the language on the sign, and there may be changes in the recorded music,” she explains. “There will be a banner added to the main entrance saying ‘Happy Holidays,’ more lights, more Christmas trees, and a candy cane walk added on the opposite side of the creche. They’ve tried to make the creche scene part of a larger, more secular display.”

Jan Seidel says the changes will be tastefully done. But if Jesus’ birth cannot be acknowledged without the attendant mythological trappings of Santa and reindeer, the message of Christmas is trivialized. Which is worse—to ban religious symbols from public property, or to place them on the level of tinsel-laden childhood allegories?

One religious symbol is so startlingly somber that it cannot be draped in tinsel or planted outside Mrs. Santa’s cottage. It is the cross, and it is being summarily banned from public Christmas displays.

In Cos Cob, Connecticut, volunteer fire fighters were forbidden to continue a 30-year tradition of displaying a wooden cross on their firehouse during the Christmas season. “The cross,” wrote Federal Judge Ellen Burns, “in the context of Christmas, is a purely religious symbol. Unlike a creche, it has no historical connections to the holiday.”

In Hyde Park, Vermont, a traditional tree erected to the memory of a local sports hero who died in 1958, was challenged by the ACLU.

Which is worse—to ban religious symbols from public property, or to place them on the level of tinsel-laden childhood allegories?

In July the Senate had passed an amendment to deny grants for works considered pornographic. However, the House rejected the cutting off of funds to the National Endowment for the Arts on such moral standards.

Outside a narrow, degenerate, inconsequential number of Americans who think this is artwork, I don’t think you’d find 1 in 1,000 who would want their tax dollars to go toward this sort of thing,” said Representative Phil Crane after examining the Mapplethorpe display of 153 photographs.

“Spending federal money for obscene art when we’re having trouble coming up with money for health care is obscene in itself,” argued Representative Dana Rohrabacher.

And North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms charged that the photos embarrassed him upon examination.

Yet, despite these passionate pleas to reconsider funding the controversial works of art, the amendment was defeated in the name of anticensorship.

Congressman Sidney Yates of Illinois stated, “This is a resounding defeat of censorship.”

While Mapplethorpe’s homosexual erotica are certainly the most shocking works to receive NEA funding, other equally disturbing works received tax funding last year.

The other most recognizable works receiving an award last year

House Approves Funding of Pornographic Art

An attempt to mandate standards on artwork funded by taxpayer dollars was defeated in the House of Representatives in September.

House members voted 264-153 to reject the proposal, following heated debates over the fine line between so-called “censorship” and the interest of national moral standards.

Most visible in this divisive debate was the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe, a homosexual artist who died of AIDS last year.

Mapplethorpe’s erotic, sadomasochistic works included nude photos of gay men—several participating in homosexual activities.

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The other most recognizable works receiving an award last year
were 10 photographs by Andres Serrano, including one presenting a crucifix lodged within a glass container filled with the artist’s own urine. The photo so angered Conservative commentator Patrick Buchanan, he termed the work “a complete outrage.”

While the House rejected proposed art standards that would eliminate tax funding for these works, the publicity did alert Americans to the fact that antifamily, antireligious material is unforgivably receiving dollars from their own pockets.

Opponents of the standards attempted to corollate classic works of art studying the human form to the sexually degenerating images of Robert Mapplethorpe’s homoerotic extravaganza.

While that distorted argument may have won votes in the House, it is doubtful such an illogical debate would convince typical Americans.

For example, in Chicago a young artist calling himself Dread Scott Tyler won an award from the city’s art institute for his work titled, “What is the Proper Way to Display the Flag?” That work, which invited onlookers to tread on the Stars and Stripes, ignited a wave of mass protest from Chicago citizens, specifically from thousands of veterans and their families. Outside the art institute hoards of protesters gathered daily, hoisting waves of flags and singing patriotic songs for the duration of the Communist student’s display.

The public outcry over the school’s allowance of this treasonous work is most likely representative of American sentiment concerning this, as well as the Mapplethorpe and Serrano shows.

“Outside a narrow, degenerate, inconsequential number of Americans, I don’t think 1 in 1,000 would want their tax dollars to go toward this sort of thing.”

Mark Smith
BRIEFS

Operation Rescue Founder Begins Jail Term

Randall Terry sits in protest.

Randall Terry, leader of Operation Rescue, began serving a two-year jail term in Atlanta in October. Terry, who has joined his followers countless times in peaceful demonstrations outside abortion clinics, chose not to pay two $500 fines for trespassing and unlawful assembly.

Operation Rescue organizers say their efforts will continue uninterrupted despite the setback for Terry.

Ironically, on the same day Terry began serving his sentence, Florida struck down a state law requiring pregnant girls under 18 to obtain parental consent before having an abortion.

Christian Door Decoration Called "Offensive"

The first thing visitors see when they call at the home of Frances Reiter is a heart-shaped sign saying, "God Bless This House" on her front door. That may soon change.

Many of Reiter's Hallandale, Florida, neighbors have complained about the small door decoration.

A member of the condominium board at Fairways Riviera said the sign must come down because no one is to put "anything strange" on his door.

However, Frances Reiter refuses to take down her plaque.

"This is my religious symbol, asking God to bless my home," she argued. She has threatened court action if she is forced to remove the sign.

It may come to that, since the condo president has said the sign is offensive because it is only a few feet from the condo's meeting room.

Conservative Representative Angers Homosexuals

California Congressman William Dannemeyer stirred up some controversy in September when he added the graphic depiction of homosexual activity to the Congressional Record.

Dannemeyer, a leader in fighting special homosexual rights legislation in Congress, says he added the controversial wording to the government publication because without such "frank discussions" addressing the aggressive homosexual agenda, average Americans might not comprehend protective homosexual legislations.

"The average American," says the distinguished Republican representative, "would not think that he was granting legal sanctions for physical acts of sodomy and other sexual perversions" without the strong, definitive language.

The strong language angered homosexual groups, who considered the description to be prejudiced. He was also criticized by several Liberal representatives, most vocally by Representative Andy Jacobs, Jr.

Dannemeyer counters their attacks by stating that his statement was "clinical" compared to the sexual terms found in federally funded "safe-sex" brochures.

Institute for Creation Research Protests Evaluation by State

EL CAJON, Calif. (EP)—The Institute for Creation Research has protested what it calls a "pattern of governmental harassment" of the school for its stand on creation.

ICR's state authorization as a degree-granting institution is in jeopardy. In August a verification team from the state examined the school and determined that it should not be allowed to continue. That recommendation was the most recent volley in an ongoing battle between ICR and Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig.

Henry Morris, president of the school, has accused Honig of "a strong antireligious bias" that is "contrary to all traditional American principles of academic and religious freedom, as well as patently unfair and discriminatory."

According to ICR, a review team that visited the school in August of...
1988 included a well-known opponent of the school, but despite his objections the school still received a 3-2 vote for reapproval. That fall, according to ICR, Honig called an unprecedented reconvening of the visitation team and convinced one member to change his vote, making the vote 3-2 against the school. ICR officials say that Honig called the New York Times to report his “intent to deny” approval for ICR, a decision ICR learned about only when a reporter for the Times called for comment.

ICR says the state has insisted that all creation teaching be removed from science courses, and has refused all efforts at compromise. In addition, the school has accused the state of “possible violations of California law” and of “dirty tricks.”

Morris asks, “If Honig is allowed to silence our minority views on controversial scientific concepts, what is to keep him from decreeing that only certain political views can be taught in California, or a certain philosophy of economics, or religion, or psychology, or journalism?”

Morris wrote to Honig notifying the state official of the school’s intention to “oppose and appeal any decision of denial as strongly as necessary.”

Judges to Join Abortion Battle

Amid speculation that the Bush administration had shied away from the abortion debate comes the encouraging statement that the Justice Department will join a Minnesota abortion case to be argued at the Supreme Court this winter. Solicitor General Kenneth Starr will file a brief favoring the Minnesota law and may later join the oral argument.

Minnesota’s Deputy Attorney General John Tunheim is encouraged by the Justice Department’s participation. He will defend the state law requiring minor girls to inform parents or a judge before undergoing an abortion.

Teen Survey Reveals Shocking Statistics

The average teenager loses his virginity by the age of 16, says a recent survey in Seventeen magazine.

The survey of over 2,000 young people aged 14 to 21 revealed:
- Nearly one-fourth of 15-year-olds surveyed had been sexually active; 60 percent of 18-year-olds, and 82 percent of 21-year-olds.
- Half of those surveyed said premarital sex is acceptable.

Other parts of the survey found 37 percent of the teens polled were often lonely, while 14 percent admitted they had considered suicide.

The poll was released in Seventeen’s October issue.

Judge Allows Distribution of Christian Newspaper in School

DENVER (RNS) — Students have a constitutional right to distribute a publication promoting Christian values at their high school, a judge ruled here September 14. Judge Richard Matsch ruled in favor of students at Ladunta High School who sued school officials in 1987 for barring the distribution of a publication that presents issues from a Christian perspective. The judge ruled it is unconstitutional for school officials to have a policy prohibiting distribution of “material that proselytizes a particular religious or political belief.”

Children from Sect Must Take Classes on AIDS, Drugs, and Sex

NEW YORK (RNS) — Children from a Fundamentalist sect must attend public school courses dealing with AIDS, drugs, and sex, despite the objections of their parents, a Brooklyn appellate court has ruled. The sect, the Plymouth Brethren, believes that even hearing about evil is sinful and dangerous. Parents of 38 children belonging to the Brethren, who attend public schools in Valley Stream, Long Island, and Rosedale, Queens, have been fighting requirements that the children must attend the classes.
It’s True. God Has Spoken!

Recently I was interviewed by a journalist from a national newspaper who asked, “Were you accurately quoted by TIME magazine as saying that you do not believe Secular Humanists are qualified to hold office in the United States?” I immediately pleaded, “Guilty.” That is exactly what I think, and it is my explanation of what is wrong with America today. Too many Secular Humanist thinkers have been making and enforcing our laws, and setting public policy—all contrary to the principles upon which our nation was founded.

The most burning issue of our day is the identity of America. Is this “one nation under God”? . . . Or is this one nation under man? The Humanists—whether legislators, judges, educators, or TV commentators and journalists—use their influence to make this a secular, man-centered nation that does not have to obey the laws of God, for many of them do not even believe in God.

But this nation was founded on the principles of God. His laws for society are clearly written out in the Bible. When the Founding Fathers referred to “law” or “nature’s law,” they meant “God’s law” as described in the Bible.

The truth is, God has spoken to man on how he should live his life. And the majority of the people of the world believe that! Jews believe it, as do Protestants, Catholics, and even Muslims. Billions of people believe God spoke to Moses when He gave the Ten Commandments.

Secular Humanists do not like moral absolutes that must be obeyed. They would rather put themselves under the changing laws of man. But in so doing they have produced societal chaos.

Humanist man says, “There are no absolutes. Situations and majority opinions determine right and wrong.” Consequently, we have a society of permissive fornicators who have produced millions of illegitimate or aborted babies, millions of AIDS and VD victims, millions of homosexuals—and millions of crime victims, whose oppressors should not have been set free to walk the streets in search of innocent citizens to offend. Francis Schaeffer was right when he said, “All roads from Humanism lead to chaos.” Today’s civil chaos can be traced directly to Secular Humanist judges, educators, and legislators.

Frankly, I find it scary to think that we have lawmakers and opinion molders who think such societal results are an improvement over God’s command, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” These people control our school sex education curriculum to the point that adhering to God’s absolutes is illegal, but their man-made, permissive ideas are taught as “truth.” No wonder millions of our nation’s youth are destroyed morally and often physically before they are old enough to vote. Such Humanists are not qualified to make our laws and serve as judges of our Constitution. Their anti-God bias has blinded their eyes to what is good for mankind. If you do not believe that, just ask the widow who is raising her three sons alone because her husband was killed by a paroled murderer, as a result of a ruling by a judge who does not believe it is for society’s good that deliberate murderers should be executed—as taught in the Bible. Do not expect her to vote the judge “qualified.”

And that is the point. God-rejecting, man-centered people have the wrong philosophy to run a country that was founded on the principles of the Bible. But such Secularist thinkers have run this country for the past 70 years, and they have changed our laws to “thus saith ‘the lord man,’” transforming our society from one of peace and safety to one of crime and chaos. As long as they keep rejecting God’s laws and experimenting with man’s ideas, they will only make our society worse . . . unless, of course, Christians finally wake up to the fact that only God-fearing leaders, committed to the moral absolutes of the Bible, are truly qualified to run this nation. If enough Christians get this message we could return this nation to moral sanity in just one decade.

Daniel Webster, a great statesman of a past generation, was asked, “What is the greatest thought that ever passed through your mind?” He replied, “My accountability to God!” This nation needs a new generation of political, educational, and media leaders who recognize they are accountable to bring our culture under the principles described in the Bible. Only then will we return to integrity, morality, and civil sanity.
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