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Be strong in the Lord . . .

Before I had the chance to turn the pages of your October issue, I knew by the cover what to expect inside. The articles that dealt with pain and suffering were meant for my wife and me. My wife, Vanessa, was recently diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a disease of the central nervous system that causes loss of muscular coordination. She has difficulty walking, numbness, and a partial loss of vision. There is no cure for MS and the medication has had minimal effect.

After the diagnosis, Vanessa had a difficult time accepting the illness, and bitterness set in. But victory came when our Sunday-school teacher, Bill Aven, and his wife, Phyllis, came to visit. That’s when Vanessa realized that the lack of peace in her life was because she had never really accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. God in all His wisdom knew what was best for our lives, and maybe He gave her the illness so she could give her heart to Jesus.

We pray every day and thank the Lord for such gracious and loving people like Bill and Phyllis Aven, and for our beloved pastor, Dr. Truman Dollar, and his wife, Donna. Only God knows where we would be without their outpouring of love and guidance.

Thank you, Journal, for the most timely articles in the October issue. No matter what the disease is, or personal loss or failure or disappointment that comes our way, we must take the words of Vernon Brewer to heart: “Be Strong in the Lord,” (Eph. 6:10).

Gary Lundy
Madison Heights, Michigan

Saving souls . . .

I subscribe to your Journal and recently read a very interesting article that quoted Psalm 8. One day while reading Scripture and pondering your article, it occurred to me that I could use this Psalm in some way to help lead unsaved souls to Jesus. The end result is a card that I have printed and propose to use in a witness program to bring souls to our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for the Journal. It is doing a wonderful work of saving souls for Jesus!

Regina M. Denman
Des Moines, Iowa

High quality at half price . . .

During the past 12 months I received a full year’s subscription to the Fun-
damentalist Journal for $12.95. The cover price would have been $22.00, $2.00 per copy.

In June 1987 I renewed my subscription for another year and sent you $14.95. The full price would have been $22.00.

Since a two-year subscription should have been $44.00 and I paid you only $27.90, enclosed is my check for $16.10. I am sure you cannot continue to produce such a high-quality magazine at half price.

I think that Dr. Falwell should go down in history as one of the great religious leaders of our time for speaking out on abortion, homosexuals, and pornography, and for the work he is doing at Liberty University and the Old-Time Gospel Hour.

Doris Heinemann
Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin

Editor’s Note: Thank you, Miss Heinemann, for your thoughtfulness and encouragement. We hope Fundamentalist Journal will be such a blessing to all our subscribers.

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Merry Christmas! Everyone on the Journal staff joins me in extending warm Christmas greetings to you, our readers.

Our prayer is that God will use each issue of our magazine to encourage you in your daily walk with Him, but the Christmas issue is our special gift to you. This month’s articles are filled with the joy, warmth, and inspiration of this most blessed season.

We offer some Christmas fiction this year. Jack Boyd imagines what Joseph might have experienced when Mary gave him her unusual news. Could he believe her? Robbie Hiner joins Angie Hunt in presenting a touching Christmas story spun off the one created for this year’s Living Christmas Tree performed here in Lynchburg.

We have enlarged our Family Living section to include many special Christmas articles and several reviews of new Christmas books and tapes.

Harold Willmington writes of the “Incredible, Incomparable Incarnation,” and I address the importance of “The Babe in Bethlehem’s Manger.”

We hope this issue of Fundamentalist Journal will enhance your celebration of the birth of Christ. Merry Christmas.

Jerry Falwell
The Babe in Bethlehem’s Manger

The marvelous Christmas story is found not only in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but throughout the Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelation. Seven hundred years before Christ was born, Isaiah began talking about the birth of the Lord by saying, “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).

The Miracle of His Birth. Isaiah speaks of the miracle of Christ’s birth by saying He had no earthly father. He was born of the Holy Ghost through the Virgin Mary. Today many either discount the Virgin Birth as unimportant or actually deny that it occurred. Either way, when you eliminate the miracle of Christ’s birth, you eliminate the salvation that is in the Cross and in the empty tomb. If Jesus Christ were not born of the Holy Ghost, conceived of the Spirit of God, born of the Virgin Mary, not only is the Word of God untrue and the record unreliable, but He is no longer God. And if He is the Son of a human, born of an earthly father, he thus inherited the sin and fallen nature of Adam, the federal head of the race, and was not capable of dying for the sins of a lost race. Either He was virgin born, the Son of God and God the Son, or His birth was not a miracle.

The Virgin Birth and the divinity of Christ are inseparable. The very name of this Son born to the Virgin Mary is Immanuel, God with us. Not just perfect man, but perfect God. Not just a Son of God, but God the Son. The Virgin Birth was a miracle, and it is the foundation stone of the gospel.

The Importance of His Birth. In chapter 9 Isaiah builds on the miracle of Christ’s birth and speaks of the importance of His birth. “For unto us a child is born.” That is the virgin-born Son of God. But now he goes a step beyond. “Unto us a Son is given,” not born, but given. Now we have the Incarnation.

The child was born, but the Son always was. Jesus was in the beginning with the Father. He was in the council chambers of eternity with the Godhead. He was God manifested.

Here is the importance of His birth, according to Isaiah. “And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful.” He was wonderful in His preexistence, in His birth, in His sinless life, in His vicarious death, in His Resurrection, and in His Ascension. He is wonderful in His intercessory ministry. He is seated at the right hand of the Father today, ever living to make intercession for us. He will be wonderful in His Second Coming. For one day He is coming again, first to take away His church, and then with His church to establish His kingdom upon this earth, where upon the throne of David He shall rule and reign for a thousand years with His church.

“He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” You and I know there will be no peace on this earth until the Prince of Peace Himself sits down upon the throne of David in Jerusalem and we rule and reign with Him.

The ultimate purpose of the Virgin Birth of the Son of God is that this One who is called Immanuel, God with us, this One who is “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,” will one day be King of Kings and Lord of Lords and shall collect and gather all things unto Himself. In that day, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. The ultimate purpose of His birth was to bring all things in submission to the Son of God, and that will happen.

The Immediate Value of His Birth. Can you imagine what this world would be like if Christ had never been born? First of all, in the more practical areas, we would have no calendar, no chronology of time. We who live in A.D. 1987 would not live in A.D. 1987 had Christ not come. All of history that revolves around the Bethlehem manger would have to develop a new perspective.

Can you imagine living in a world with no Christian values, no Bible, no prayer, no churches—no Christians? Everything that is precious and valuable, including salvation and the promise of eternal life, is wrapped up in that little Babe born in the Bethlehem manger. If Jesus Christ were not born of the Holy Ghost, conceived of the Spirit of God, born of the Virgin Mary, not only is the Word of God untrue and the record unreliable, but He is no longer God. And if He is the Son of a human, born of an earthly father, he thus inherited the sin and fallen nature of Adam, the federal head of the race, and was not capable of dying for the sins of a lost race. Either He was virgin born, the Son of God and God the Son, or His birth was not a miracle.

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A Time to Remember

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A Philosophy of Christian Political Involvement

by Edward G. Dobson

Last month we considered the future of religion in politics. To succeed in our continuing participation in the political life of our country, we must establish a clearly defined philosophy of Christian political involvement. This would include several key factors.

Theological and Philosophical Basis. If we are going to seriously affect American political and social life, we must understand what we are trying to accomplish. We are not merely advocating the election of certain officials as an end in itself. Francis Schaeffer clearly understood this when he argued that Christ must be Lord in all of life. He wrote, “He is our Lord not just in religious things and not just in cultural things... but in our intellectual lives, and in business, and in our relation to society, and in our attitude toward the moral breakdown of our culture.” Acknowledging His lordship involves placing ourselves under the authority of Scripture and thinking and acting as citizens of His kingdom as well as citizens of Earth.

Because the Christian is a citizen of two kingdoms, one earthly, the other heavenly, he has an obligation to both. He cannot divorce himself from either. He is under divine mandate to both. Nevertheless, he realizes that one is temporal and the other eternal. But that in no way prohibits his involvement in the temporal; in fact, it enhances it.

The Christian understands that the wrongs of society are not merely social ills but spiritual ills. They require spiritual help, not merely political readjustment. Ultimately, there are no permanent political solutions to the problems of society. But that does not mean we should all retreat to a monastery and advocate social anarchy for the rest of the world.

There are no permanent political solutions to the problems of society. But that does not mean we should all retreat to a monastery and advocate social anarchy for the rest of the world.

Long-range Strategy. Complex problems have no instant solutions. The New Right has often been criticized for offering simple answers to complex questions. However, this need not be the case. We do have valuable answers to the important issues of the day, and those answers need to be articulated clearly and thoughtfully. This is not the time for arrogance or overstatement of our case. Neither is this the time for capitulation.

No one ever said this process would be easy. One of our greatest needs today is for a long-range strategy to enact our goals. We cannot rest on the laurels of the past, or the future will catch us totally off guard. We must seriously disagree on political matters. Neither is this the time for capitulation.

Careful Use of Power and Influence. People expect politicians to talk about politics, but when preachers talk about politics, the general public may perceive them as religious authorities. When preachers defend political or social issues, some may think they somehow speak for God. The average layman may have difficulty distinguishing between the two. Therefore, we must be very cautious in the statements we make regarding religion and politics.

We must also exercise caution regarding those with whom we disagree. In some cases our political opponents will be fellow believers, who need to be respected as such even though we may seriously disagree on political matters.

This is perhaps the most difficult issue of all for Christians in politics. We are all so quick to believe that “God is on our side,” that we tend to see our political opponents as God-hating, Christ-denying hypocrites. Unfortunately, this kind of prejudice works both ways, and it has been used on the New Right as well as by the New Right.

Financial Integrity and Accountability. Certainly the abusive misuse of funds uncovered during the recent PTL scandal serves as a reminder to every ministry that integrity in fund-raising and accountability in financial expenditures is essential. Preachers need to be especially careful not to focus their attention only on issues that are financially beneficial, but on issues of truth, whether they are popular or not, whether they produce funds or not.

The Priority of Justice. According to Scripture, the ultimate authority of law comes from God and is a reflection of His nature and character. In this sense even majority rule is not always right. Hitler was supported by a large majority of Germans and was able to function within legal parameters while slaughtering millions of innocent people.

At times the greater issues of human justice transcend political boundaries. The real issue today is not whether one is a Democrat or a Republican, but whether he is committed to justice. This means that we must defend the rights of those with whom we disagree.

We are asking only for the opportunity to be heard in the debate on public policy. Now that we have everyone’s attention, we need to think carefully about what we are going to say.
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THE REVELATION

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WINTER TOUR - 1988

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The Incredible, Incomparable Incarnation

by Harold L. Willmington

Even though 20 centuries have elapsed since the Bethlehem scene, the concept of the Incarnation still staggers the human mind.

The Prophecies. The birth of Christ is a fact. It is first mentioned in Scripture in Genesis 3:15. Neither Adam nor Eve (to whom these words were spoken) had experienced physical birth. Both were directly created, one from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7) and the other from a human side (Gen. 2:21-22).

But the Messiah would be born of a woman. This method of birth must have been shocking, for originally the woman had come from the man, but not so with the future Messiah. He would proceed from the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). Further, He was to be born of a virgin woman (Isa. 7:14). This woman would conceive and bear the Christ child without the involvement of a man.

By nationality He would come from Israel (Gen. 12:3). This prophecy was especially remarkable, for Israel did not officially become a nation until the days of Moses, many centuries later (Exod. 19-20). Even then, it would remain a small and insignificant country in the Middle East. She was, however, to have an important mission, for the Saviour of all men would come from her borders.

He would come from Judah, one of Israel’s 12 tribes (Gen. 49:10). The oldest tribe was Reuben, and perhaps the most influential tribe was Ephraim, but the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah.

He would come from the house of David, of the tribe of Judah in Israel (2 Sam. 7:12-13). David was the eighth son of a poor Bethlehem shepherder, but this family would produce the Saviour of the world.

Christ was born 33 years prior to His death. According to Daniel 9:24-27, His death would occur some 483 years after the beginning of the project to rebuild the Jerusalem walls.

The place of His birth was to be the little town of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). God could have chosen Rome, or Babylon, or even the Jewish religious center of Jerusalem, but instead He picked Bethlehem, the “House of Bread.”

The sign accompanying His birth was a special supernatural light in the form of a star that would brighten the heavens and point to His birthplace (Num. 24:17).

There would be unusual interest in His birth. Wise men would come to Bethlehem to worship Him (Ps. 72:10; Isa. 60:3, 6, 9). Wicked men would come to Bethlehem to kill Him (Matt. 2:16-20).

The Particulars. The following verses in Luke 2 are some of the most well-known and beloved in all the Bible. “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem;” (because he was of the house and lineage of David;) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her
David was the eighth son of a poor Bethlehem shepherder, but this family would produce the Saviour of the world.

firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn " (Luke 2:1-7).

There are 31,173 verses in the Bible. The one here in Luke 2:7 is perhaps the most amazing and profound of them all. "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

One may favorably contrast Luke 2:7 with Daniel 2:11. In this Old Testament passage King Nebuchadnezzar had just ordered the death of his wise men because of their inability to relate a dream he had just experienced. These astrologers protested, exclaiming, "And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

However, this would not be the case after Bethlehem. God would dwell in flesh. Never in earth’s history was such a babe born. Never was such a birth announcement made. Listen to it.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:8-14).

Well, the shepherds have heard the glad tidings. What will they do? "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them" (Luke 2:15-18, 20).

Notice the twofold reaction of these shepherds. First, they "came with haste." God wants individuals to respond quickly when they hear the glorious news of the Saviour. They are to come with haste. Second, they "made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child." In short, they shared the good news with others.

The Purposes. Why the Virgin Birth Incarnation? God never does anything without a good reason, and there were a number of excellent reasons for the Incarnation.

To reveal the invisible God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" (John 14:9).
God loved the world, but how could He get His message across? He sent Jesus into the world to become man and tell God's story in man's language to reveal the invisible God.

To make a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus left the ivory palaces of heaven to come down to this world and enter the womb of Mary, to make a sacrifice for our sins. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9).

To provide an example for believers. We are told in the Scriptures that Christ suffered, and that He left an example for us, that we should follow His steps. The world often misunderstands the Incarnation. The world thinks Christ is the example for unbelievers, but 1 Peter 2:21 says that Christ has come to be an example for believers. He is not an example for unbelievers. He is the Saviour. He came to save unbelievers and make them believers. Once we are saved we study the life of Christ because He is our example. But there could be no example apart from the Incarnation. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

To defeat the Devil and his works. “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

To provide the believer with a High Priest. To become the believer’s High Priest, Christ had to be made like His brethren. He passed sinlessly through all human experiences, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in all things pertaining to God, to make atonement for our sins. He was obliged to become completely like His brethren—apart from sin, of course. “Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

To heal the brokenhearted. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering the sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18).

To reconcile man to God. In 2 Corinthians 5:19 Paul reminds us that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”

To give life and abundant life. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).
Love Brought a Miracle

by Angela Elwell Hunt and Robbie Hiner

"Tell us the story, Grandpa! Tell us the Christmas-coat story again!"

My rosy-cheeked grandchildren were never lovelier, and no Christmas more permeated with the magic of love than this one. My wife and our daughters had prepared an incredible Christmas feast. As usual, before the meal was served I had proudly watched my oldest son gather his children and nieces and nephews around him, to tell them the beautiful story of the Christ child.

But now those beautiful children wanted to hear my Christmas tale, and I, Thomas A. Hoskins III, was only too pleased to tell it to them.

It was December 24, 1887, in Melody, Massachusetts. My great-grandfather Robert Hoskins lived in a small house with his wife, Ida, and their two children, baby Mary Anne and Tommy, who was about 12 at the time.

As she did every evening, Ida rocked the baby and softly sang a hymn. The poor family had no Christmas tree, no sparkling presents, and no Christmas feast. In those days folks worked hard to make a living, but lately there was no living to be made. Robert had lost his job at the factory months before, and he had turned to alcohol for comfort.

Young Tommy brought his daddy in and helped the poor man sit down at the table. Robert was drunk, but Ida simply told Tommy to get ready for bed. She would join him for prayers in a minute.

When Ida and Robert were alone she tried one last time to get her husband to agree to go to the town's Christmas night services with her and the children. Everyone in Melody would be enjoying the traditional celebration. From early morning until dinnertime on Christmas Day there would be music and games in the town square. On Christmas night, after all had eaten their Christmas dinners, they would bundle themselves in warm clothing for the minister's outdoor service around the Christmas tree in the center of town.

More than anything in the world, Tommy wanted his daddy to go to that service. But Robert repeatedly refused, saying that he had no overcoat good enough to wear. Ida did not mind going in her twice-turned cape, and Tommy willingly wore his too-small jacket, but Robert had his pride. He had no money and no job, but he surely kept his pride.

Ida joined Tommy as he prayed quietly, "Dear Father, bless my papa tonight. I love him so much, Lord. Help this Christmas to be different for my daddy. Amen."

Christmas morning brought no holiday cheer to the Hoskins house. There were no presents. Ida did her best to make things festive by preparing steaming bowls of bean soup for breakfast, but Robert was stretched out in a stupor, and Tommy had left the house before the sun was up.

Ida could not tell what Tommy was up to, but she suspected that he planned to surprise her by singing in the children's choir. "Robert Hoskins, you get up this instant," she playfully teased her sleeping husband. "I believe your son is going to surprise you today, and you need to get up and get some hot soup in you so you can go stand outside and hear your son sing."

But Tommy was not at choir practice. He was in the village store, where he had been every morning before dawn for weeks, cleaning, sweeping, and doing odd chores to earn the new overcoat that hung in Mr. Penniworth's window.

Tommy was just beginning to sweep up when Mr. Penniworth came into the store. "Um, Mr. Penniworth?"

"Yes, what is it?"

"Will I have enough earnings after today to get the overcoat? And if I don't have enough, may I work the rest off on credit?"

"Ts fine," muttered Mr. Penniworth. "But why would a boy like you be wanting a coat 10 sizes too big? Could it be you're planning to do a lot of growing this year?" He paused and...
When Ida Hoskins arrived at the town square with baby Mary Anne, she was greeted by Millicent Beadle, the wife of the parson. "Ida, dear, how nice to see you. I want to thank you for the coverlets you quilted for the orphanage. They were simply lovely.

Ida lowered her eyes and blushed. "It was nothing. I'm glad I could find a good use for all those scraps."

"I see that Robert must be feeling unwell today," Millicent said, tickling Mary Anne under the chin. "But where is your sweet son?"

"Tommy has been running off for weeks. I think he's planning to surprise me and sing in the children's choir. He's so funny," she said, laughing. "When I asked him what time the children would sing he put on a big show about not knowing exactly when. I finally got him to say he thought it was at 11 o'clock."

"I'm sorry, dear, but I believe the children have already sung," said Millicent. "Here comes Priscilla; we can ask her."

Accepting Priscilla's enthusiastic hug and profuse compliments, Millicent asked, "Priscilla, dear, since you know simply everything about today's program, could you tell us when the children's choir is to sing? Ida would like to see Tommy perform."

"Tommy Hoskins in the choir?" Priscilla exclaimed, raising her eyebrows. "Now that's news! The children's choir sang some time ago, the little cherubs. I can guarantee that Tommy Hoskins wasn't among them."

The ladies ventured off and did not notice Robert Hoskins emerging from the shrubbery at the edge of the square. "Eleven o'clock, 11 o'clock," he muttered, and then stumbled and fell over a small table loaded with Christmas bells. The ensuing racket drew every eye in his direction. When Mrs. Penniworth saw the commotion, she trumpeted, "There you are, " a familiar voice said. "Take good care of it, son," she said gently. "And take good care of your father, too."

"I will, sir," said Tommy, his face shining. "And I'll be back at work early tomorrow!"

"There's no working tomorrow, son," said Penniworth. "Take the day off."

Tommy's heart was full of hope as he walked home with his hard-earned package. With the new coat, his father would go to the Christmas night service. He would hear about God's love. He would receive Christ as his Saviour.

His pleasant thoughts were shattered by an unexpected figure in the semidarkness. "There you are," a familiar voice said. "Tommy recognized his father. "I'd like to know where you've been," said Robert Hoskins. "You lied to your ma and me. You let us think you'd be singing in the choir, but you've just been out running with the irresponsible rascals of the town. I'm ashamed of you, boy! It ain't enough that a man can't hold up his head in this town because he's poor, out of work, and has a wife who washes other people's dirty clothes, but now my son is a scoundrel and a liar!"

Tommy choked back tears. "No, Pa."

"Get on home, boy!" roared Robert. "Now!"

Tommy ran off, hot tears of anger and pain burning his eyes. How could his father assume the worst? What had he ever done to make his father treat him so badly? He had been working for weeks, and for what? To give a present to a hateful man! Like a wounded animal in flight, Tommy ran to the abandoned dry well near his ramshackle house and threw his precious package into its yawning mouth. It fell silently, and finally Tommy heard a dull thud from the cavern below. Mr. Penniworth watched from a distance as Tommy sat by the edge of the well and sobbed.

A few moments later Ida peeked over the bushes and saw her son crying softly. "There you are," she said gently,
ignoring the tear streaks on his face. “I was beginning to believe I'd have no escort to the service tonight. Mrs. Smyth has agreed to look after the baby. Your pa isn't... he isn't feeling well.”

She sat next to Tommy and tenderly lifted his head to her lap. “Won't you be a gentleman and take your mother to the service?”

Tommy lifted his head and tried to speak. “Ma, you don't understand. Pa thought... I worked... I prayed... It's not fair!”

Ida smoothed his hair and quietly shushed her son. “It may not be fair, son, but don't give up hope. Love can bring miracles, you know. Love brought us Christmas, and love brought you and Mary Anne to your pa and me. We both love you so much. And I love your pa. He hasn’t always been like this. The love that brought us all together years ago can bring us together again. You’ll see. Just have faith in love because God is love. He can do anything.”

Back at the town square, people were milling about in nervous anticipation. The barbershop quartet had sung, and the ladies’ chorale, and the Simpson triplets—angels on stage and rascals off. Millicent Beadle absentmindedly polished the silver tray to be presented to the winner of the Embodiment of Christmas Spirit Award, and Priscilla Penniworth mentally placed that tray on her mantel, between her Wedgewood vase and the sterling silver nutcrackers Aunt Bessie had given as a wedding present.

“How can you be so calm?” whispered Priscilla violently to Mr. Penniworth. “I've been so busy with the program I've hardly had a moment to write an acceptance speech. Of course I should mention my work with the Ladies’ League for the Beautification of the Graves of Our Glorious Dead, and my membership in the New England Daughters of the True and Noble Descendants of Captain John Smith, but would it seem too pompous to mention I am the only woman in town who can claim a direct blood linkage to King George?”

Mr. Penniworth sighed wearily. “Nothing you could say, dear, would appear unusually pompous.”

“Look there,” Mrs. Penniworth hissed, her attention diverted from the pressing matters at hand. “You'd think Ida Hoskins would at least implore her son to change his clothes. He looks as though he'd been working like a farmhand all day!”

“Perhaps he has,” answered Mr. Penniworth, watching the two find a seat in the row of park benches.

The audience grew quiet when Millicent Beadle mounted the platform. “It is my very great pleasure to now present the annual Embodiment of Christmas Spirit Award,” she said. “As you know, this award is given to the man or woman who has done the most for the community in terms of self-sacrifice, love, and devotion.”

“Thank you, dear friends and neighbors,” practiced Mrs. Penniworth under her breath. Her husband glared at her.

“This year’s award,” continued

continued on page 45
The winter wind kicked dust and splinters through the door as the thick-clothed man entered. He slammed and barred the door, then dropped to one knee in front of the fireplace and its mound of blue-gray ashes. "That miserable Greek," the man muttered to himself as he brushed aside the thin layer of ash with a handful of wood shavings, exposing a dimly glowing bed of coals. He dropped the shavings on the coals and blew gently. When they caught he placed twigs and wood scraps on the tiny flame.

The fire, jumping and illuminating the living half of the woodworker's house, provided just enough heat so the man—Joseph to his friends, Seph to his parents—could remove the thick talith he had worn to Caesarea. The heavy cloak could almost stand by itself, it was woven so well. He threw the leather workman's belt in the corner, then turned toward an earthen bowl of lamb stew which had remained half-buried in the wood ashes since before the sun was up. Now, warm and fragrant, it would provide his evening meal and broth for the bread sop.

Abruptly, Seph kicked the solid table, pretending it was the neck of that arrogant Greek who had called him a tecton. "I'm more than a house-builder!" Seph said aloud, the shattered silence causing him to start. Through cold lips he whispered with pride, "I am a craftsman. I am a cutter of wood, a maker of cabinets." He huddled near the fire to slurp the stew.

Could this week have gone worse? Impossible! Monday he split and carried a large cask to his shop before discovering most of the wood had been destroyed by wood beetles. Tuesday he cut one finger so badly he could scarcely hold the chisel for the mallet. Then there was Wednesday. Seph closed his eyes as he shook his head slowly. Wednesday. Only yesterday. Was it so recent? He had walked through his small village to the home of the girl who was to be his wife. She answered his knock, invited him in, and then, in a curiously hushed and self-controlled voice, she told him she would have a child in a few months. He was too stunned to reply. She tried making some absurd excuse about it not being her fault, but of course it was. Seph stalked out of her house without a word, refusing to listen to her ridiculous argument. The rising cold wind blowing straight off the Great Sea could not compare to the frigid clench of his heart. First he cried, then he shouted his anger at the betrayal. He had to think, but his mind was a block of ice. The memory of the torment on Mariamne's face as he strode out of her house returned with each breath. Suddenly a loud knock on his door startled him.

"Joseph? Seph, are you there? I saw the light under your door."

Quickly Seph unbarred the door to let his father escape the freezing night wind. The old carpenter walked directly to the fire and backed up to it, rubbing his hands behind his back. "To Caesarea and back in one day. Your donkey had to walk fast." The attempt at small talk was a transparent failure. "Did we get the contract?"

"Not for the large cabinet, but the woman next door saw my wood chip and asked about a smaller cabinet."

Absently, he felt above his ear and pulled the thin, narrow piece of wood from his hair. He laid the carved piece, the sign of the cutter of wood, on a small table. "She wants it by next week. I can do it by myself, if you wish."

"Yes," the broad-shouldered man said. "I'm sure you will do well." A long, awkward silence distanced them. "You look angry?"

Seph slammed his hand on an ornate table. "That Greek! That contemptible, one-eyed Greek called me a tecton. Me! I'm no house-builder. I make the wood obey me!"

Old Jacob smiled thinly. "Your pride runs to the surface, my son. Beware." Then he frowned again. Twice he started to speak, but both times his words trailed off into silence. Finally he stumbled into a sentence. "Seph, do you know what people are saying about... about your, ah... betrothed?" His head sagged at the final words.

"About—Mariamne?" Seph said slowly.

His father nodded curtly.
Seph moved directly in front of his father. "Tell me," he said, his voice raspy, his face stolid. The old man tried looking directly into his son's eyes, but he failed. "It is said . . . that she . . . is halfway through having a child."

The news was in the marketplace. Like a slit bag of feathers, there would be no containing it. "And what else is being said?"

Seph's father spread his hands helplessly. "They wonder what she will do, now that you will not be seeing her again."

"These people who talk so easily are not in charge of my life," Seph said hotly. "The decision will be mine."

Old Jacob turned to stare into the flickering fire. "Some things cannot be the decision of one man."

"Father, I am a grown man. Mariamne is little more than a child. I can make the decision."

"No," Jacob said evenly. "The pledge came from her guardian to me, and a marriage is part of this community. Your decision is only a small segment of it, like a single spoke on a wheel. We must take back the pledge."

"You speak of the community. Is that what you fear most, what the community will say?"

"I speak . . . I speak for many generations, going back to the great men, to Zerubbabel who was in Babylon, to David, to Abraham who was the father of Isaac and the grandfather of Jacob, my name ancestor." Old Jacob's voice rose with the telling of the familiar history. "I speak for over 40 generations. And soon you will speak for them also."

Joseph bar Jacob. Seph the son of Old Jacob the cabinetmaker, turned toward the fire. A slight choke colored his voice. "And—who speaks for Mariamne, my Mary?"

"My son, this has happened before. Always we make the woman an outcast, as a lesson for the community. A village, like an individual, must be pure."

Seph turned on his father, his voice dark with rage. "Is that what King David did with Bathsheba?"

"Joseph, you are not a king. You are a man, a worker." Old Jacob shoved a chair roughly. "If you want to make a man's decision, then do so, but remember, you must ride the balance between one young girl and an entire community. The greater good for the village . . . or your own pleasure." He strode toward the door, but his anger stopped him. "Would you sell a table with a scarred top or a weak brace?" There was no answer. "If you had been a cutter of wood in Solomon's temple, would you have placed a finely carved beam but weak beam across the Holy of Holies?"

Seph watched as his father pulled the door shut. Only the popping fire punctuated the stillness. Only the flickering light moved. Just give me a piece of wood, he thought, then I will make a decent decision. But instead here are flesh and mind and future generations to consider. Seph dropped to the floor and pulled the thick camel-hair talith around him. Its soothing warmth comforted him as the irregular waving of the fire caught his eyes. His mind wandered in and out of his own 30 years.

He remembered the rabbi talking, long ago, about—what was it? Something about a son who was to be born. One of the great prophets spoke it. Seph remembered liking the passage because it reminded him that he also wanted a son, someone he could train as a cabinetmaker and carpenter, a son he could name Eliud or Zadok or David, great names from his own family.

Seph squinted and turned his head as an orange flame leapt from the end of one of the logs, lighting the room. The old rabbi spoke about that Child, that Son, who would be called a Wonderful Counselor . . . and that would mean He would make the proper decision. He would know how to make both the individual and the community happy, because He was—Seph twisted his face in concentration—yes, He was to be called the Prince of Peace.

Seph's head drooped slightly as the old rabbi's words jumbled themselves, words about David's throne and unending peace. Then a final sentence, perfect in his memory as if the old teacher were here now: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Joseph bar Jacob sat up suddenly, his eyes wide at the remembrances. What a marvelous image! The old prophet would know how to take care of Mariamne. But how does a man make such decisions now? Are these times different?

He frowned at what he had to do. The decisions had to be made, and this was as good a time as any. He tried listing the good and the bad, the benefits and the liabilities, the arguments for helping or for rejecting Mariamne. He willed his mind to work, but something, the flickering light or the swirling wind, pushed all his careful thoughts into a useless muddle. Slowly, he settled his body. Then, with a deep sigh, he slept.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.

—Matthew 1:18-25

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Bollback Celebrates Christ in Music and Song
From South American Jungles to City Streets

from "Sights and Sounds of Christmas"—“Ring the bells. Ring the bells. Let the whole world know. Christ the Saviour lives today, as He did so long ago.”

by George Theis

Tony Bollback, the first of his German family to be born in the United States, realized too late that he had wasted precious years he should have given in God’s service. At a missionary conference in Manhattan he fervently promised God, “I can no longer go to the mission field. I’m too old. But you can have my three children to work in full-time Christian service.”

As the years passed, Tony Bollback saw his oldest son, Anthony, set sail for missionary work in China. His daughter married a pastor, and his second son, Harry, left to reach savage Indian tribes in the jungles of Brazil.

“Why the jungles?” Tony wondered. For Harry had another gift which potentially outweighed his value as a missionary. He was a talented musician, and his parents had sacrificed over the years to provide piano and other music lessons for him. Teachers and fellow musicians had always praised the young man’s ability. “He has a real gift,” they had said. “One day he will play in Carnegie Hall.”

Today some of the men who tried to kill Bollback and his colleagues are now pastoring churches among their own people.

After his conversion at a youth camp in New York, young Bollback had dedicated his music to the Lord. Every Saturday night he played piano in the Wyrtzen rallies held by evangelist Jack Wyrtzen. As he played the invitation hymn each week, Harry saw hundreds of young people come to accept Christ as personal Saviour.

World War II interrupted Bollback’s piano playing, and for over three years he served in the South Pacific. When he returned home he married his longtime sweetheart, Millie, and resumed his seat at the piano during Wyrtzen’s rallies.

One night at a youth rally, Wyrtzen gave an invitation for missionary service. The needs of a lost world had been clearly expressed, and Bollback felt the keen call of God. As Wyrtzen called for the group to sing one last chorus of the invitation hymn, he suddenly noticed there was no piano accompaniment. The
crowd continued to sing while Jack cast a curious glance toward the piano. To his surprise, Harry Bollback was no longer there, but was walking toward the front to dedicate his life to full-time Christian service.

Bollback became a firebrand dedicated to burning the truth of God into the hearts of lost sinners and saints alike. After completing his Bible education, he was prepared for the ministry. His parents wondered what God could do with a musician in the jungles of Brazil, but Tony Bollback knew that God would provide for and direct each of his children.

Harry could not take a piano with him to the jungles, so he used his musical skills on a manual accordion. This instrument became known through the jungles of central Brazil, as Bollback and his colleague Harold Reimer invested four years of their lives among some of the most savage Indians of the twentieth century.

Perhaps one of their most rewarding exploits was to seek out the fierce Chavante tribe. These Indians had massacred other white men who had dared come near, but Bollback and his friends were determined to contact the tribe.

The first meeting between Bollback and the tribe seemed peaceful, but suddenly the Indians’ mood changed. For several days and nights Bollback and his companions fled downstream away from the Indians’ poisoned arrows. But because the jungle river twisted and turned, the Indians had the opportunity to run downstream and catch the missionary canoes as they passed by.

Terror suddenly struck the Bollback party as they rounded a bend in the river and saw the Indians poised with their bows and arrows at the top of a cliff. There was little the missionaries could do as the current swiftly carried their canoes between the two bluffs where the Indians were waiting. The possibility of survival seemed remote. As the current catapulted the canoes into the narrow pass, the sound of arrows hissing through the air and the screams of the Indians stunned the missionaries. But in seconds the Indian party as they rounded a bend in the river saw the Indians poised with their weapons and arrows at the top of a cliff. The possibility of survival seemed remote. As the current carried the canoes into the narrow gorge, the sound of arrows hissing through the air and the screams of the Indians stunned the missionaries. Bollback and his party turned, the Indians had the opportunity to run downstream and catch the missionary canoes as they passed by.

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Bollback wrote the words and music to "Jesus Is with Me Wherever I Go." Later, members of the Chavante tribe walked to the missionary base and established a peaceful contact which led to numerous Indian conversions. Today some of the men who tried to kill Bollback and his colleagues are now pastoring their own people.

A Wainwright returned to the United States in 1955, he asked Jack Wyrtzen a question from deep within his soul. "Why couldn't God do the same thing with the youth of Brazil that He is doing through Word of Life in the United States?"

Wyrtzen responded with a simple directive, "Go back to Brazil and begin a Word of Life camp." They held an early morning prayer meeting at the boathouse on Word of Life Island in New York, and placed this vision before the board and staff members present. Wyrtzen closed the meeting by singing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," and by noon that day God had confirmed to Wyrtzen and Bollback that Word of Life should become "Word of Life International.

Bollback returned to Brazil. During his labors there he penned his well-known song "Ring the bells. Ring the bells. Let the whole world know. Christ the Saviour lives today, as He did so long ago."

Because Bollback dared to step out in faith and begin a camp in Brazil, today the Word of Life ministry has stretched across the world in 27 different countries. Over 120 missionaries from the United States and Canada and hundreds of national workers carry the gospel of Christ to a lost world.

To help give direction to this ever-expanding ministry, Bollback returned to the United States and began traveling extensively. His return to the home staff brought a new and dynamic music emphasis that has stimulated growth to the entire ministry of Word of Life. Impressed with the need of stirring the hearts of Christians, Bollback sought the Lord for ideas that would enable him to bring thousands of people out to hear the Word of God. The musical training provided by his parents became an effective tool in the hands of this man who had learned to serve God well.

In 1975 a group of 50 singers from the Word of Life Bible Institute in Schroon Lake, New York, began to travel and present a concert called "I Love America." In 1976, in the midst of bicentennial fever, Bollback wrote the words and music to "Let Freedom Ring." This concert was such a success that it appeared on national television.

After 10 years of concert tours, more than two million people have heard the WOL Collegians in face-to-face performances, and as a result more than 2,000 people register decisions to receive Christ as personal Saviour each year.

Each year a new program is born with the help of Brian Donley, professor of music at the WOL Bible Institute, and the WOL Collegians. Each presentation brings a new insight into the Word of God. Just the mention of the names of these programs—"'Not My Will," "Let Freedom Ring," "'His Truth Goes Marching On," 'Ring the Bells," "'God's Portrait of Love," "'Daniel," "'Revelation," "'Genesis," and "The Passion Play"—fans the memory of thousands whose lives have been spiritually touched by the hand of God through the musical presentations.

Though all of the programs are effective in communicating the gospel, none compare to the presentation of "The Passion Play," a dramatic presentation of the death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Collegians have crisscrossed America, Canada, and Great Britain, renting large auditoriums to present the gospel. Bollback’s God-given creativity and musical genius is communicating the gospel in a style to which modern men and women are accustomed: with drama, narration, multimedia, and music. Last year the spectacular "Sights and Sounds of Christmas" turned away over 1,000 people from Madison Square Garden.

He is a missionary and a musician—happily, the two have combined in a ministry to reach the entire world for Christ.

George Theis is codirector of Word of Life and a veteran missionary of 20 years in Brazil.
“I couldn’t be happier with this system. I wish fundamental churches as a whole would realize the importance of high-quality sound to their ministries. American Audio Systems and JBL are to be highly commended for the design, installation, and product quality provided.”

—Dr. Jerry Falwell
Pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church
Lynchburg, Virginia
Ministry Is Foremost
Steve Green

by Raymond J. Catooge

Two hours prior to concert time a line of people 50 yards long awaited the opening of the church doors. An hour later the parking lot was full and the line twice as long. Fifteen minutes after the doors opened, the auditorium was filled to capacity. People continued to file in, chairs were placed in the aisles, and latecomers sat in the choir loft. The crowd buzzed with excitement.

Finally, loud applause welcomed the evening’s guest of honor, a well-groomed, blond man with all-American boyish looks, as he took his place before a single microphone. Silencing the crowd with an aura of reverence, the gifted tenor lifted his voice toward heaven and issued a “Call to Worship,” a song that set the stage for the remainder of the concert.

What followed that evening was not entertainment, but a service where Jesus Christ was glorified in worship and praise. Steve Green’s broad repertoire thrilled the spirits of believers—young and old alike. The congregation participated in a time of singing choruses, with Steve at the guitar. Steve and his wife, Marijean, challenged husbands and wives with a vocal duet. Steve’s testimonies and powerful preaching compelled Christians to pursue a deeper level of commitment to Christ. He gave an intense a cappella performance of “A Mighty Fortress,” and reflected preaching rather than singing in his rendition of “He Holds the Keys.” After the concert Steve greeted believers cordially while the sound track to “People Need the Lord” played in the background. Believers left rejuvenated in their walk with the Lord.

Steve Green’s name is fast becoming a household word among Christians worldwide. How has he achieved recognition with no gimmicks, slogans, or promotional campaigns? The underlying factor is his commitment to ministry and worship—above music and performance. According to Steve, “I began to see that God could use me, not through fame, but through influence.”

On August 1, 1956, Stephen James Green was born to Charles and Jo Green in Portland, Oregon. When Steve was 4 his parents were called as Conservative Baptist missionaries to South America. Steve, with his two brothers and two sisters, was reared on the mission field. In sharing childhood experiences he said, “Dad had some unusual ways of attracting a crowd. There were five of us children and we all played musical instruments. He would take us to a village and load us on a street corner and say, ‘OK, children, play.’ We would play instruments and sing. Soon a crowd would gather and Dad would say, ‘Enough, children.’ Then he would preach.” During Steve’s upbringing in Argentina, at age 8, he accepted Jesus Christ.

“I’m grateful for my heritage and thankful for a sound Christian home.” Steve admires his parents’ dedication to missionary work and their unreserved love for God, but admits that he experienced times of bitterness. Inwardly, he felt his parents’ level of commitment to Christ was a radical one that he would never embrace.

At 17, Steve returned to the States to enroll in Grand Canyon College in Phoenix, Arizona. He entered college as a pre-law major, with dreams of launching into the professional world and enjoying the “good life.” After some coaxing by the head of the music department, Steve changed his major to vocal performance.

During his sophomore year at Grand Canyon, the Christian singing group

In the world of Christian music, concerts must be coupled with a personal life of thirsting for God.
“Truth” visited the campus. Steve sang for the group’s director, and two weeks later he received a call to join them. He accepted the invitation.

Steve met Marjene while travelling with “Truth.” She was a music education graduate from Stetson University in Deland, Florida, and a fellow member of the group. They were married in Bradenton, Florida, in the summer of 1978. After years of travelling with “Truth”, the Greens decided to move to Tyler, Texas.

Those plans changed when the Bill Gaither organization asked the Greens to join their association. They relocated to Alexandria, Indiana, and from that base travelled with the Bill Gaither Trio for two years. Shortly thereafter, Steve became one of the original members of the Gaither Vocal Band.

In 1982 the Greens moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to begin a full-time music ministry. Sparrow Records approached Steve with the idea of doing a solo album. Many honors followed, beginning with the album Steve Green, and the “Male Vocalist of the Year” award bestowed by the Gospel Music Association at the 1985 Dove Awards.

Steve’s next album, He Holds the Keys, earned him two Dove nominations and a Grammy nomination as “Gospel Male Vocalist of the Year.” This year Steve again received the “Male Vocalist of the Year” Dove Award, for his powerful For God and God Alone album, and “Album of the Year—Best Musical” for A Mighty Fortress, a joint effort with musicians Niles Borop and Dwight Liles. In April Steve released Tienen Que Saber, a Spanish album for a missions trip to South America. He released Joy to the World in October.

August 1983 was a pivotal time in Steve’s life. The entire Green family was in Phoenix for the wedding of his younger sister. Steve’s veneer was exposed when his brother Randy lovingly confronted him about his relationship with God. Steve was angry at first. The confrontation embarrassed and humiliated him. But that night Steve fell to his knees and prayed. Steve’s veneer was exposed when his minister counseled him about his relationship with God. The joy of his salvation was restored, and his wife was the first one to know. As he made restitution to friends and relatives, his ministry took on a new perspective. Restoration became the theme of his life. At a recent concert, Steve commented between songs, “Christianity isn’t just a name. It should be a thread that runs through a believer’s life. It’s a believer’s theme. It runs through every fiber that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.” The commitment of his parents that seemed to frustrate him years before was now his very lifeblood.

Recently, Steve, Marjene, and Dave and Judy Green, Steve’s brother and sister-in-law, traveled to South America for a missionary evangelism trip. During the 11-day trip the group visited Ecuador, Argentina, and Venezuela, conducting a number of concerts and reuniting with the Greens’ parents. Working closely with HCJB Radio and Missionary Aviation Fellowship in Ecuador, the Greens were able to visit Indian villages and outlying areas of the country. Also included in the itinerary were concerts in Salta, Argentina, where the Greens grew up; in the boarding school where Steve and Dave were educated on the field; and at International Baptist Church in Caracas, Venezuela, the newly founded ministry of their parents. In an April interview on Moody Broadcasting Network’s Prime Time America, Steve commented from South America, “Receiving the Dove Award, and then flying to the mission field, put things in their proper perspective. People down here don’t know Steve Green.”

The Lord has given Steve Green the privilege and responsibility of a bigger platform than he ever expected. Trips are scheduled in every corner of the United States and invitations come from all over the world. The concerts are normally held in churches. Steve strongly feels that the environment should be conducive to worship and praise, and he always preaches to his listeners. He says, “It is so important to have an atmosphere where ministry is foremost. My main goal is that people will be encouraged in Christ and strengthened in Him, and that it will be an evening of pointing our hearts and our minds toward spiritual things. Really, I have no solution other than to point people to Jesus Christ. He doesn’t just meet needs in some simplistic way—He is the Solid Rock for everyone’s life.”

Steve recalls the days when they travelled 14 hours to sing to 30 people, but he does not regret it. His spirit of humility remains to this day. Upon receiving his 1985 Dove Award, Steve said, “When the Israelis were getting ready to go into Canaan, God reminded them not to forget that they came out of Egypt, and to remember that all the things that had happened to them were not because of their own hand.”

Steve and Marjene have two children, Summer, 6, and Josiah, 2. They live in a quiet town-house complex in a suburb of Nashville, Tennessee, and they cherish time together as a family. Important to them are things like sharing Jesus Christ with their neighbors, family outings, praying together, and people. According to Steve, the course of Steve Green Ministries does not depend on his success as a musician or on his ratings with the Gospel Music Association, but on his willingness to serve. “If the voice goes, there are 100 possibilities of serving Christ—music is just one of them,” Steve says about his future.

The star syndrome, popularity, and fame all have ways of separating performers from ministers. In the world of Christian music, concerts must be coupled with a personal life of thirsting for God. Steve Green Ministries is a sound attestation of that longing so vitally needed today in Christian living.

Steve Green wants his concerts “to be a place where people can sit back and be bathed in love for the Lord.” If the opportunity arises to attend one of his meetings, be sure to take advantage of it. The inspiring atmosphere and music will enliven your heart. But be prepared for a spiritual cleansing, a sacred confrontation, and a scriptural plea to reach a higher level of commitment to Jesus Christ. For the man who went from the mission field to the music world to a life of serving, consistently urges his hearers to enter the abundant life where ministry is foremost.

Raymond J. Catogge is director of Christian education at Temple Heights Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida.
Christmas Prayer

O God, our loving Father,
help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds,
and the worship of the Wise Men.
May the Christmas morning make us happy
to be your children
and the Christmas evening bring us to our
bed with grateful thoughts,
forgiving and forgiven,
for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

—Robert Louis Stevenson
John Hus
A Simple Faith Led to Europe's First Protestant Church

by Paul Murray

The small settlement of Gracehill, just off the main road a few miles west of Ballymena, Northern Ireland, is the only Moravian community left in Ireland. There is a plain church, a scruffy green square, and three well-preserved and handsome eighteenth-century houses in black stone.

Children scamper among flat grave stones in the nearby cemetery, not knowing that the flat markers are witness to Moravian belief that the rich should have no higher monument than the poor, because in death all are equal.

For 223 years coffins of deceased female Moravians were borne up one path to the settlement cemetery on the hill, while men were carried up another pathway.

In the Moravian community church in Gracehill, Presbyterians worshiped alongside Catholics, a rare occurrence in Ireland.

The Moravian church is the oldest Protestant church in Europe. It was born out of the teachings of John Hus 40 years after he had been burned as a heretic. This intelligent and dedicated man had preached a simple faith, used the language of his native Czechoslovakia, and opposed the indulgences then practiced in the church.

The Gracehill settlement and mossy gravestones are reminders of this remarkable man and the unique influence of a church that was more concerned with inspiring people to accept the gospel than with building up the Moravian denomination.

John Hus was born during 1369 in Husinec, Czechoslovakia, near the Bavarian border. He was educated at the University of Prague and began to lecture there in 1398 when he was 29.

He was educated at the University of Prague and began to lecture there in 1398 when he was 29.

The tribunal challenged Hus to publicly recant his erroneous views. He refused, and sentence of death was pronounced.

Three years later Hus became dean of the philosophy faculty and developed a superb reputation as a preacher in the university's Bethlehem Chapel.

Hus was elected rector of this chapel, which had been built by the citizens of Prague to encourage preaching in their own language, as opposed to Latin.

At this time John Hus became captivated by the teachings of the deceased pioneer reformer John Wycliffe. He translated Wycliffe’s writings into Czech and actively promoted Wycliffe’s philosophy. This did not endear Hus to church authorities, who were suspicious of new teachings. Hus, like Wycliffe, opposed forged miracles and clerical greed.

In 1408 the clergy of Prague laid before the local archbishop a formal complaint against the 40-year-old Hus. Their objections were that he preached against them and used strong language in his denunciations.

John Hus was deprived of his synod preaching position and forbidden to perform priestly functions. Despite this, he remained popular with civic authorities and the common people.

The archbishop instructed an inquisitor to deal with the charges against Hus. As an indication of which side he favored in the dispute, the archbishop had 200 books by John Wycliffe burned in the Prague square. After the inquisitor’s report, which favored the opponents of Hus, the archbishop excommunicated Hus and his friends from the church.

John Hus continued to preach and remained popular with the common people of Prague. In time the whole city was placed under church interdict, but nothing seemed to deter either Hus or those who believed in his sincerity and message.

In 1413, when he was 44, Hus was requested to go to Constance, Germany, for a council inquiring into the truth of the charges laid against him. He was granted safe conduct and attended the conference. But the safe conduct was a ruse and was broken without conscience by the clergy who had lured him to Constance.

When John Hus came to trial the stage was carefully set for his condemnation. The works of John Wycliffe were denounced, and when Hus tried to make a defense against the charges against him he was shouted down. He claimed admiration for Wycliffe but love for the church and was against abuses and error.

The tribunal challenged Hus to declare he had erred in his preaching and teachings, to promise not to hold or spread his views in the future, and to publicly recant his erroneous views. He refused. Sentence of death was pronounced on July 6, 1415. He tried to argue his cause but was refused a hearing.

So it was that John Hus, citizen of Prague, was taken at the age of 46 and burned to death at the stake. Afterward, in order to give his followers no opportunity to venerate his remains, his ashes and the soil on which they lay were...
The works of John Wycliffe were denounced, and when Hus tried to make a defense against the charges against him he was shouted down. He claimed admiration for Wycliffe but love for the church and was against abuses and error.

Moravians thus found indirect influence in the remarkable Wesleyan revivals of the next century.

Initial Moravian efforts in North America were among black slaves, first in the West Indies, and then on the continent. Zinzendorf saw in North America a possible haven from European persecution. However, work among North American Indians and educational efforts with children dominated Moravian endeavors for some time. Not until the mid-nineteenth century did the church itself begin to grow in significant numbers. This took place primarily in Pennsylvania.

The Moravian church today is a small and almost insignificant group in the total picture of world Christianity. But the influence of the church, inspired by the life and teachings of John Hus and publicized by Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, cannot be measured by membership alone. Its influence is felt throughout the Christian world in teaching if not in recognition. And that is probably how John Hus would have wanted it to be, a legacy, not in organizational proliferation of a large denomination, but in the improved lives and influence of individual believers.

Paul Murray is a free-lance writer in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
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To the Praguers
25 December 1413
Dearly beloved!

Abeit I am now separated from you so far that it perhaps is not fitting that I preach much to you, nevertheless, the love that I have for you urges me that I say at least a few brief words to your love.

Lo! dearly beloved; as it were an angel today said to the shepherds: "Bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." And suddenly a multitude of angels cried aloud, saying: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

Commemorating these things, dearly beloved, rejoice, for today God is born a man, in order that there may be glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will.

Rejoice, that the infinitely Great is born a child, that there may be glory to God in the highest.

Rejoice, because today One was born to cleanse sinners from their sin, to deliver them from the power of the Devil, and to save them from eternal perdition, and bring them into eternal joy, that there may be glory to God in the highest.

Should there be but little rejoicing? Nay, a mighty joy!

Angels, namely God, became food for men, to refresh the hungry with His glorious body, that they may have peace on earth.

Rejoice, that the immortal God is born, so that mortal men may live in eternity.

Rejoice, because the rich Lord of the Universe lies in a manger as poor, that He may enrich us needy ones.

Rejoice, dearly beloved, that the God-priest was born, who grants to every penitent absolution from all sins, that there may be glory to God in the highest.

Rejoice, that a child is born to us with all power, for a son is given us full of sagacity and grace, that there be glory in the highest.

O dearly beloved, should there be but little rejoicing over these things? Nay, a mighty joy! Because a Redeemer is born to us, to free us from all misery, a Saviour of sinners, a Ruler of all His faithful; there is born a Comforter of the sorrowful, and given us the Son of God, that there be to us a great joy, to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will.

May the God born to us this day deign to grant us that good will, peace, along with joy! Amen.

Adapted from The Letters of John Hus, translated by Matthew Spinka, Rowman and Littlefield, Totowa, New Jersey.
TRBC Counseling Affiliates with Rapha Mental Health Services

Christians requiring in-hospital psychological counseling often cannot find a program that does not undermine their beliefs. Although professional psychological help is sometimes needed, Christians may be hesitant to seek it, or to recommend it to those in need, because much of the treatment available is not based on truth. It rejects rather than reinforces Christian faith.

Recognizing this need, Dr. Falwell, whose ministries receive thousands of calls for help, has announced an affiliation with Rapha, which provides Christ-centered professional services in hospitals throughout America. Taking its name from the Hebrew word for “healer,” Rapha offers hope and help, through individual and group therapy, to adults and adolescents who suffer from psychological and substance abuse problems.

Chemical dependency (a drug or alcohol problem), attempted suicide, eating disorders (anorexia or bulimia), severe depression, paranoia, periods of confusion, severe loss of memory, severe anxiety attacks, and violent outbursts against others are among the problems that may require the protective and therapeutic environment of a hospital.

Pastors, counselors, parents, and people in need of this service may call 1-800-345-8095.

Kay Raysor

Looking Back...1961

Macel Falwell Shares A Christmas Memory

Our most memorable and happy Christmas was the Christmas of 1961. We’re a very close family and we always celebrate the holiday together. My parents, two sisters, and brother were all spending the holiday at my house that year. After we had opened all of our gifts, I told Jerry that I had another gift for him and called him into the next room.

When we were alone together, I took his hands, looked at him lovingly and said, “Jerry, we’re going to have a baby.” Several months before Christmas, I’d asked him what he wanted for Christmas, and he had said, “I’d really like to have a baby boy.” So when the doctor told me I was pregnant, I decided not to tell anyone at all—not even my family. I wanted the announcement to be my gift to my husband on Christmas Day. I was three months pregnant at the time.

When I told Jerry, he was so surprised that he said, “I just don’t believe it! Prove it to me!” I remembered a book on pregnancy that the doctor had given me, so I showed Jerry the book. He said, “Well, you could have bought that.” Then I remembered a prescription the doctor had given me for morning sickness. When I showed that to him, he finally believed I was pregnant. He just stood there with tears rolling down his cheeks.

We walked back into the living room to tell my parents. This was to be their first grandchild. We all sat there crying with joy for a long time. Our first son, Jerry, Jr., was born the following June—on Father’s Day of 1962!

Adapted from Redbook.

Eddie and Cindy Lyons

Missionaries in the Philippines

“Missions was our life.” For Cindy Hughes Lyons, that sums up life in a family that lived and ministered in another culture. Cindy and her husband, Eddie, look back on growing up on the mission field as an enriching, fascinating experience instrumental in their decision to continue their lives in service for the Lord in the Philippines.

With his parents, Eddie first arrived in the Philippines by boat in 1965. He recalls looking forward excitedly to the first Filipino kid he would be able to play with. Eddie now assists his father at the Baptist Bible Church and in the Manila Baptist Bible College in the Philippine capital of Manila.

While serving in the U.S. Air Force in the Philippines, Cindy’s father, Bob Hughes, became burdened for the people with whom he came in contact. After his military discharge, he returned to the Philippines and spent 20 years pastoring the pioneer work of the Baptist Bible Fellowship begun by Frank Hooge on the island of Cebu.

Although living on different islands, back-and-forth visits for fellowship and ministry brought the two families together regularly. A close friendship developed between Eddie and Cindy.

After graduation from Bible college in the States, Eddie returned to the
Philippines to begin a ministry with his father. Cindy stayed in the United States after college, working on the missions staff at Liberty University as campaign coordinator for SMITE (Student Missionary Internship Training for Evangelism). She worked with students on foreign outreaches to seven countries. On a trip to the Philippines, she was able to spend time with Eddie and renew their childhood friendship. They were married in April 1984.

Now, as a second-generation missionary family, they are effectively ministering for the Lord in Manila, the Philippines. For insight and encouragement they have the example of godly parents who taught them the value of giving their all to the Lord.

Howard Erickson

How Shall They Hear?

Interaction best describes the recent week-long World Impact Missions Conference at Liberty University. Centered around the theme “How Shall They Hear?” Liberty students were challenged to be actively involved in world evangelization by praying, giving, and going.

The key elements to this challenging week were the missionaries and mission agency representatives who spoke in classes and chapel. Missionaries were readily available for informal discussion with students seeking better understanding and direction concerning involvement in world missions. This interaction provided an indispensable contribution to an effective week of missions communication.

LU faculty and staff responsible for coordinating this vital missions program are excited by what will prayerfully become long-term results from the numerous commitments made by students. By the end of the week 460 students made or confirmed decisions to pray for missions more regularly, 157 promised to be instrumental in financial support, and 351 are seriously considering full-time ministry in God’s harvest field.

The challenge “How Shall They Hear?” made a solid impact, one that will be felt around the world as these students follow through on their commitment to be involved with the Lord in communicating His gospel to those who have not heard.

Howard Erickson

Calendar

December

5-6—The Living Christmas Tree at TRBC
11—Christmas Festival with David Meese at LU
11-13—The Living Christmas Tree at TRBC
December 17-January 18—LU semester break
27—Dr. Falwell speaks at First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas

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Howard Erickson

Members of the Sounds of Liberty include: First row, seated left to right: Dawn Allen, Karen Randlett, Susan Matherly; Second row, left to right: Mike Coker, Rusty Goodwin, Kenny Brown, Mark Christian; Third row, left to right: Dave Fossler, Alberta Gouthen, Jane Slusher, Julie Jeffries, and Steve Burba. (Not pictured, Gary Modish)
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Give the Gift of Giving

by Tim and Beverly LaHaye

Christmas is an excellent time to teach some of God’s principles to your family, especially that “it is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Children are naturally excited about receiving gifts at Christmas, and as parents we want to give them special expressions of love at this season. This will always be an important part of our holiday celebration. But we make a serious mistake if we allow our children to think of Christmas only as a time of receiving.

In our efforts to make their Christmas as happy as possible, we may overlook the one gift that would bring them the true joy of the season—giving to others in celebration of our Lord’s birth. Think about it. When we do all the giving we selfishly keep the best blessing for ourselves, because it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive.

In ancient times, when a king’s first son was born people gave gifts to their neighbors. To them this meant the perpetuation of a stable government. It made them think life was secure.

For us, the birth of God’s Son means the great Good News of the gospel is for everyone. Sharing that Good News as a family is an enriching experience.

You might take your children to a senior citizens’ home and conduct a service for the residents. They love to hear children sing. You could give some appropriate gifts, such as a houseplant or cookies. Visit two or three weeks before Christmas. It stretches the season for them.

Consider visiting an orphanage or children’s home. Encourage your children to make gifts for the children. Giving of themselves in this way is one of the most satisfying things your children can learn to do at Christmastime—or anytime.

Another important activity is visiting the shut-ins and poor families of your community. If you can afford it, take a tree and trimmings to a less fortunate family about 10 days before Christmas. Return on Christmas Eve and bring them dinner. But let them know your intention, so they won’t plan something else.

When you deliver the tree, you can look over the situation. Note the children’s ages and anything that may give you ideas for gifts. During the next week or so, discuss the gifts you will want to take when you return on Christmas Eve. (This could also be a Christmas project for a Sunday school class or youth group.)

Your children will have the rewarding experience of giving to those who cannot give in return. They will learn firsthand that in giving we receive the most blessed gift of all.

Beyond the Tinsel

I could feel the cold tingle of snowflakes falling against my face as I dashed through the parking lot. I found my car and placed my packages in the trunk. Away from the noisy crowds and the visual barrage of tinsel in the shopping center, I breathed a sigh of relief in the quiet comfort of my car.

I was angry and frustrated for most of the trip home. Why had this most beautiful Christian season been so obscured by things completely unrelated to the birth of our Lord: Santa Clauses, bells, lights, candy canes, and bright packages screamed for my attention. I saw hardly any evidence of the Christ of Christmas.

Then, quietly and gently, the Holy Spirit made me aware of the words Joseph had spoken to his brothers, who sold him as a slave into Egypt. “Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good” (Gen. 50:20). I thought about the way I had let the season depress me. Perhaps God was showing me I should try to see Jesus in all those things that had upset me, even those with pagan origins.

A candy cane—the shape of a shepherd’s crook—reminds us of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14). As the white color of the cane symbolizes the purity of Jesus, let the red stripes help us remember the blood of His sacrifice.

With his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

Christmas lights bring to mind the words of Jesus. “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). As we receive this light from Him, we are commissioned to share it with others, “Ye are the light of the world’” (Matt. 5:14).

Holly, with its prickly thorns and bright red berries, is a vivid reminder of the crown of thorns our Saviour wore, with drops of His blood where the red berries grow. Focus your thoughts...
restitution for us” (Heb. 9:11-12).

What about the Christmas tree? The prophetic words of Hosea 14:8 answer. “I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.” The verse had been there for centuries, but it seemed absolutely new as I read it over again.

While rejoicing in my newfound treasure, I thought of the song, “O Christmas tree. O Christmas tree, how lovely are thy branches.” Hosea 14:8 began to blend with this old tune, resulting in new words: “O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, remind us of God’s promise. O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, remind us of God’s promise. For He is like a green fir tree, yielding fruit all year to thee. O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, His mercies never fail us.”

In the heart of the believer, Christmas doesn’t have to be commercial. God used these symbols to replace my angry negative feelings with joy. He turned into good what I felt was meant for evil.

I Marjorie Gordon

The Secret of Snootbaum

Thirty-five years ago two children stood arguing loudly at the back of Woolworth’s dime store. I was one of them. My brother John and I were on a Christmas shopping expedition, and I was firmly convinced that I knew exactly what kind of gift would please our mother.

We were in front of the rack filled with hideous plaster of Paris poodle dogs that John had decided would be the perfect gift for Mom. They were grotesque. Each stood about two feet tall and came in a variety of colors: shocking pink, brilliant blue, and flashy yellow. John had his heart set on a blue one.

“I’m going to buy Mom one of those for Christmas,” he said. “She’ll love it because I do.”

He walked out of the dime store proudly carrying the most hideous gift of all time—at least in my eyes. I was certain Mom would make fun of his choice, certain that the poodle was an awful present, and certain that John had made a fool of himself this time.

I don’t remember what I bought for mother that year; no one does. I’m sure it was something sensible and practical. But everyone remembers that was the Christmas Snootbaum came to live at our house.

I remember the smile of delight on Mom’s face when she unwrapped that ugly blue dog. I can still hear her telling John that it was exactly what she wanted for Christmas, and Dad chuckling and saying, “John sure has a knack for giving
Christmas gifts."

Personally, I did not understand it. No matter how you looked at that dog, he was ugly. Yet he was given a name, "Snootbaum," and for years occupied a place of honor on the hearth of our fireplace.

Snootbaum stood there in all his glory, providing a discordant note in our tastefully decorated living room. When he was finally kicked over and broken into a hundred pieces many years later, I was relieved, but mother was sad. She had loved that old plaster of Paris dog. But why she did was still a mystery to me.

Twenty-five years later I understood. My daughter Laura was 7 at the time—a little girl who loved animals passionately. She played with sheep, cows, goats, pigs, and horses—all of the plastic variety. A large bag of plastic animals could occupy her for hours as she sat on the floor pushing them this way and that, weaving stories about them.

That year she shopped for Christmas presents with her dad. Wisely, he refrained from making too many suggestions and allowed her to choose what she thought best. A six-inch statue of two pigs hugging each other caught her eye. They stand on my bookcase today, grinning foolishly at each other, forever frozen in a piggy embrace. One's snout is cuddled on top of the other's, and their hooves are tucked cozily under their chins. A slogan on the base of the statue reads, "Ain't love grand?"

Indeed it is. Laura, indeed it is. When I look at that small statue now, I do not see two silly pigs. I see a little girl who went shopping with her heart. She is now a young woman who still loves animals, but who now gives much more "sensible" gifts to her mother. The pig statue becomes more precious to me as the years go by because when I look at it, I remember a small child who is no more—a little girl who gave from her heart a gift that was really her. And I can hear a little boy saying, "Mom will love it because I do."

This Christmas season I want to remember that my gifts are more meaningful and more precious when I give of myself than when I give for the lavish display to impress. A gift of the heart lasts in the memory. John knew at 8 the secret of abundant gift giving; Laura knew at 7. It took me a quarter of a century to unlock the secret of Snootbaum. But finally I understood.

Carol Pirtle

But Lady, You're Rich!

Two Sundays before Christmas, my daughter and I were on our way to church. As we stopped for a red light, a little scruffy-faced beggar boy pushed an empty beer can through the open window of our car and said, "Would you give me some money for Christmas?"

Having lived for many years in Brazil, I found this common practice of begging to be more a source of irritation than a stimulus to give "just because it is Christmas." Unconcerned, I said, "I'm in a hurry and don't have time to get to my purse right now."

He turned his big dark eyes toward me and said plainly, "But lady, you're rich!"

His words caused me to reach for my purse, and before I really knew what I was doing, I had put some money in his can. Although this matter-of-fact statement sounded straightforward to the boy, it set loose a torrent of emotions inside of me.

On that sultry Sunday morning, I did not feel rich as the world counts riches. In fact, I was fully aware of many reasons for feeling poor.

A veteran missionary, I was missing my 18-year-old, who was going to college thousands of miles away in the United States. In a few days he would be out of school for Christmas vacation. I longed to bring him home, but we did not have the money for his plane fare. No, I didn't feel like a rich lady.

A woman her age. She loves her work, but in the world's eyes it is certainly no job for a rich kid!

My mother in yet another state, would watch church programs on television from her nursing home bed. If I were a rich lady, I thought, I would bring my mother to Brazil and keep her in my own house with a nurse to help care for her.

Other "poor" negative thoughts flooded my mind, like 10-year-old living room drapes that had to be washed with care so they would not come apart, and furniture bought 22 years ago. These were certainly not the furnishings of a rich lady's home, I reasoned.

As we drove on, my thoughts came back to the beggar boy's comment.
What did he see that I was blinded to? I tried to look at myself through his eyes.

I saw a plump, well-dressed lady driving a car with a lovely teenage girl by her side. Obviously, these ladies had not slept on the street as he had. Nor had they searched through trash cans for their breakfast. A glance showed that they had not missed many meals, if even one!

Their clothes looked new, and fit them—not like his tattered shirt without buttons. They wore shoes. His bare feet burned as he stood on the hot asphalt. The ladies smelled like soap, clean hot water, and perfume. He smelled like kerosene, straw, and sweat.

Every day he waited in line with his bucket at the community water spigot with other children and women from the slum. These street women, like his mother, tried to impress each other with their stories and foul language.

Sometimes his mother was fortunate and worked in the homes of rich ladies like the ones in the car. She washed and ironed their clothes all day long. His clothes, however, were always dirty. Men came and went at his house, but none of them were his father. He didn’t know his father.

Did this pretty girl have a father? He did not know that her father would preach that day, teaching that God is love and that God is love and forbid them not.

Well . . . do you remember . . . when life was so simple, and you were so naive? Just for a moment, reconnect with the little child that lies just below your “polished” exterior. What made you laugh? Cry? What were your dreams? I can remember my days as a “professional” singer (age 3). I would don my red-and-white, floor-length nightgown, and position myself carefully on our fireplace hearth. With hairbrush in hand, I would sing—very loudly—til both my audience and I were quite exhausted. As I grew older (age 7), I moved from the stage (or hearth) to television performance. Refrigerator and freezer commercials were my favorite! I can still recall my dad buying several after each “production.”

What effect has such play had upon my development? I am not a professional singer (although my family informs me that I still sing quite loudly). I did not make the “big break” into television. (I did, however, break one of our freezers!) Evidently, the developmental impact did not come in the particular endeavor or fascination. My parents encouraged and applauded my efforts, and in that “playful support” made an indelible impact on me.

To say that play is as basic to a child’s total development as making him eat his green beans, take baths, and go to bed by 9:00 is by no means an exaggeration. Play involves the development of growing bodies, as a child discovers his physical talents and abilities and learns muscle control and coordination. Play also involves the mind and emotions. A child is able to play out his feelings and thoughts, often recreating real-life experiences. Trying on new roles helps enlarge his world and his understanding of it. Have you ever watched your children play school? Or perhaps pretend they are doctors? Or choir directors? By its very nature, play is educational.

As we at the Christine Wyrtzen Ministry watched
our children play, we realized we were missing an opportunity to teach them biblical principles through their toys and other entertainment. Expecting them to sit down and learn their Bible verses from index cards seemed unrealistic, after they had been exposed to the excitement of "Sesame Street." Realizing the value of children's playtime, we studied the various tools that make their entertainment fun, and we committed ourselves to the task of incorporating as many as possible within "Critter County." Soon, Sydney the squirrel, Lester the lion, and Grandmother Mouse began to "function" and "play" in a fantasyland that could depict real-life situations and personalities. Children are able to learn Scripture easily through rhyme and song, and the "critters" present biblical standards in interesting and exciting ways.

In addition to such products, what kinds of activities can parents use to encourage positive play?

Find creative alternatives to television viewing. Children easily become "entranced" by the television, but they instantly become spectators rather than participants. Since play is active rather than passive, television discourages play. Some believe the only solution is to pull the plug, and deny its existence. Others have turned the tube into a full-time baby-sitter. Essentially, both are extremes. There is a balance. Along with our children, we must strive to become selective viewers. Clearly, the responsibility for the quantity and quality of TV viewing must begin with adults, and the objective must be to encourage creative play for children.

Don't be afraid to join in the fun. One of the cherished pleasures of being with a child is the freedom to be playful. We can indulge in sheer silliness and participate with complete abandon. A man need not be a professional baseball player to impress his son with his batting average. One mother regularly has a tea party with her 7-year-old, and all of her "stuffed" friends. During these special times, the mother thoroughly enjoys reliving her own pleasant childhood memories while making some new ones for her daughter! Play can be greatly encouraged through your participation.

Be sure to provide materials that encourage play. Toys are the tools that kids use for their play-making. This cannot be taken lightly. Does the toy encourage the child to use his imagination, his creativity? Is it a wholesome toy?

Play is not merely an extra to be added when time permits. It should be a basic ingredient in a child's day. We make sure they take their naps, brush their teeth, and eat their "veggies." Are we equally concerned that they develop their minds and bodies?

Children are valuable. Their worth should be nurtured, their endowments enhanced. This Christmas as you carefully choose your child's gifts, keep in mind his need for educational, creative, and morally sound playthings, whether they be toys, games, cassettes, or books. And remember that the greatest gifts you can offer are your time, love, and attention.

Shawna Heisler with Paula Bussard

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.

—Luke 2:9-14
Family Bookshelf

All Paths Lead to Bethlehem by Patricia and Fredrick McKissack. You can almost smell the cinnamon cookies baking and feel the cold, clear, clean snow as you read All Paths Lead to Bethlehem to your children. The McKissacks enlighten children's imaginations as they describe how children of different countries celebrate Christmas.

This book is simply written, yet composed in such a way that even a little 3-year-old's eyes light up as she listens. The story of Jesus' birth is given new meaning by the customs of Christians in many countries—Ireland, Ghana, Germany, Mexico... Children learn that no matter where you are in the world on Christmas Eve, all paths lead to Bethlehem!

Your child will be delighted and amused by the creative illustrations and original approach to telling the Christmas story. This book is an excellent tool to get preschool or elementary-age children to ask more about why baby Jesus came to earth, as you educate them about the Christmas celebration. (Augsburg Publishing House, 1987, 32 pp., $4.95)

Melanie J. Lockard

The Best Christmas Ever by Darli Daley Knorr, illustrated by Gwen Connelly. What a touching story! My daughter was captivated as she followed Jenny through the events leading to The Best Christmas Ever.

When 6-year-old Jenny draws Trudy's name for a Christmas-gift exchange, she is terribly upset. But her mother explains that Trudy's family barely has money to buy groceries and that the present she receives at the Christmas party may be her only gift.

Jenny has a change of heart and chooses a very, very special gift for Trudy. Some unexpected things occur during the school party and some very 'grown-up' decisions are made by a caring little girl. The spirit of Christmas is truly displayed.

Written for elementary-age children, this book is one of four in the colorful 'Jenny and Josh' series, designed to teach Christian principles. Other titles include Me First, A Secret Birthday Gift, and A Super Friend. My only complaint is that the pages are not numbered. (Standard Publishing Company, 1987, 32 pp., $4.95)

Cindy B. Gunter


CBG

Christmas Is... by Sue Turrier Hayes, illustrated by Kathryn Hutton.

Youngsters will be excited to hear this Christmas story in poetic form. It explains that although sights and smells and parties and presents are a big part of our Christmas celebration, most importantly 'Christmass is love, God's love for Me. Christmas is Jesus, And His birthday you see.' Children will love the cute illustrations as well as the story. (Standard Publishing Company, 1987, 24 pp., $1.59)

CBG

Newly released Christmas albums to enhance your holiday festivities and lift your spirit.

Steve Green's Joy to the World is wonderful as he sings a variety of Christmas songs in his dynamic style. On the jacket, Steve has this to say: 'The focus of the Christmas season is the coming of Emmanuel—God with us. 'Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.' Now that is the reason to celebrate and worship! Our world still needs to hear the Good News—the Savior has come.' From his heart, Steve bears the Christmas message in song. (The Sparrow Corporation, $9.98 record or cassette, $14.98 compact disc)

David T. Clydesdale Presents Impressions of Christmas is a very pleasant instrumental collection of traditional Christmas music. Some of the arrangements are a little different from the familiar tunes, but not so much that they are unrecognizable.

Clydesdale is known for his orchestrations and arrangements on award-winning recordings of Steve Green, Sandi Patti, Lamelle Harris, and others, as well as his church musicals including 'We Shall Behold Him' and 'How Great Thou Art.' This Christmas production is one more of his great works for the world to enjoy. (The Sparrow Corporation, $7.98 cassette)

Maranatha! for Kids has released a jewel. Kids' Christmas Sing-a-long is filled with 26 Christmas songs. Most are old traditions, some are newer, all bring back warm memories of Christmases past. Sung by The Maranatha! Kids, this production will appeal to young and old alike. (Maranatha! Music, $7.48 record, $7.48 cassette)
Witness the incredible disappearing act of the chameleon, one of nature's amazing magicians. Visit a miniature city ruled by a giant queen. Then take an imaginary journey to a galaxy more than a million light years away.

With Moody Videos, you can bring the magic, mystery, and adventure of God's universe into your family room. These all-time Moody favorites will help you nurture your children's faith while teaching them about the wonders of creation. And they'll provide an imaginative way for you to share the gospel with your friends.

Look for Moody Children's Adventures, designed for children in primary grades through junior high, and Moody Science Classics, for older children and adults. At your favorite bookstore. Or call toll free 1-800-621-7105 (in IL, call collect 312-329-4166) for our free catalog and a listing of local dealers. And introduce your family to a whole new world.

Miracle continued from page 21

Millicent, "goes to a woman who gave of herself when she had little else to give. Her children are a testimony of her devotion to them and to God. This year's winner," she smiled gently, "is Ida Hoskins."

The audience gasped and turned to stare at Ida. "I can't go up there," she whispered to Tommy. "I simply can't."

"I'll go with you," Tommy volunteered, clasping his mother's hand and leading her to the small platform. The applause of the crowd embarrassed Ida further, and she retreated behind Tommy and Millicent as her cheeks reddened.

"Wont you say a word or two?" asked Millicent.

"I can't," whispered Ida. "Son, you say something for me."

Tommy stepped out and faced the crowd. "Um, my mama's a little shy," he began. "I know she's grateful that you fine people think a lot of her. She's a good mama, a fine Christian, and... well... she's just an excellent woman." The crowd laughed as Tommy grinned and thrust his hands into his pockets.

"But I know she'd want me to tell you that Christmas means more to her than any time of the year. 'Love brings miracles,' she always says, and the greatest love brought the greatest miracle at Christmastime when Christ came to us."

Suddenly the crowd rippled and parted to let a latecomer through. Tommy's eyes widened as he saw his father, sober and neatly dressed in the new overcoat, approach the platform.

A brokenhearted Robert Hoskins softly said, "Son, I was wrong, and I ask you to forgive me."

With tear-filled eyes he looked to his wife. "Ida, I've wronged you, and I beg your forgiveness. And folks," he said, turning around to face his neighbors, "I've been ignoring you and fighting many of you for months. It's time to quit. I know now that I need to be forgiven by all of you and by God."

Robert turned to the astonished Reverend Beadle. "Pastor, if it's all right, I'd like to use this place here to ask Christ to be my Saviour."

"It certainly is," answered the preacher.

Before all of the townspeople of Melody, Massachusetts, Robert Hoskins was gloriously saved. A family was reunited, a lost love was rekindled, and an entire town learned that nothing is too hard for the power of God.

"Mr. Penniworth, what do you think of that?" asked Priscilla Penniworth, astounded at the turn of events.

Mr. Penniworth only shrugged and pulled out his handkerchief. "Kerchoo!" he replied.

"Love brings miracles," my great-grandmother Ida Hoskins used to say. I smiled at the thought of an old storekeeper with wisdom, compassion, and a knack for fishing packages out of wells. And looking at my grandchildren, I thought, Love still brings miracles today.
THE HOLY BIBLE

The Perfect Book. I wondered how the world began, so I read the Bible and discovered that God created the heaven and the earth. The earth wasn’t like it is now; it was dark and had no shape at all. God brought light, separated the land from the water, formed mountains and valleys, then planted grass and trees to make the land beautiful. He put fish in the water, animals on land, and birds in the air. Then He made man in His own image to enjoy the lovely garden He had created. The Bible tells the secret of beginnings.

I wondered what life was like thousands of years ago. Who were the people living then and what did they do? From the Bible I learned that Abraham left his home to follow God’s leading to a strange place; Moses led the children of Israel through the Red Sea; and David played his harp as he tended sheep. I learned how the judges, the kings, and the prophets made history. The Bible is a record of what happened in the past.

I heard about the change in the way time was measured and wondered what it meant. I found out that angels and wise men and a Baby fulfilled the Old Testament and brought in the New Testament. Jesus was human like me, but He was also the Son of God. He healed the sick, calmed the raging sea, and taught that God is love. He died to save lost souls from sin, but was raised from the dead and returned to heaven. The Bible is a story of the life of Jesus.

I wondered if the story of Jesus had real meaning for me. Did He die for my sins too? My Bible said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). I learned that I should repent of sin, be baptized, and let the Holy Spirit guide my life. I found salvation through the Bible.

I wanted to know more about God and how to live the Christian life. From the letters of Paul I learned to hold fast to the faith, to put on the whole armor of God, and to be filled with the joy of the Lord. James said to do good works. Peter said to grow in grace. John said to love one another. The Bible tells me everything I need to know to get to heaven. The Bible is the perfect book!

Esther M. Bailey

Satan’s New Age Plan...

You Are the Secret Target

In the pages of this revealing new book, the secret “Plan” of the New Age Movement is exposed for the first time in startling detail. Basing the book on an in-depth investigation of the Movement, author Texe Marrs includes over 600 actual quotes from New Age leaders which unveil their “Plan” for establishing a New Age Messiah to lead a One-World Religion and a global government. As part of the “Plan,” the Movement intends to wage a total spiritual war against Christian believers. Their ultimate goal? To eliminate every vestige of Christianity.

A sobering exposé of the alarming New Age Movement with an urgent message for every believing Christian.

Texe Marrs

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PRECIOUS MOMENTS FAMILY EDITION BIBLE

The Precious Moments Family Bible will be cherished by future generations as a family heirloom. Full-color reproductions of Sam Butcher's artwork highlight Old and New Testament Bible story sections. Young marrieds will appreciate the special family features of certificate of marriage, family tree, "Precious Moments from Our Wedding Day," "Our Family," "Our Children and Grandchildren," special times together, church record membership, and a record of deaths in the family.

This edition includes center-column references so that you can cross-reference Scripture texts; explanatory notes; and literal, alternate, and equivalent translations of meaning.

Of particular help to families is the section on establishing family devotions. It offers suggestions for you to receive the most from your family worship time. A list of recommended Scripture readings and a systematic division for reading the Bible through in a year are provided as guides.

Bible students will appreciate the inclusion of the harmony of the gospels telling the date, event, and location of happenings recorded in all four gospels. New and struggling Christians will be encouraged by "The Christian's Guide to the New Life." It gives a broad overview of knowing God's Word, understanding God's being, beginning and growing in the Christian life, facing problems, and recognizing God's institutions of the family, government, Israel, and the church.

Other features include people and places of the Bible, a concordance, and words of Christ in red. The New King James Version offers easier-to-understand language. The white, bonded leather cover is padded, and the pages are edged with gilded gold. It comes gift-boxed for convenient gift giving. Precious Moments collectors and noncollectors alike will appreciate this precious family Bible. (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1987, 1,016 pp., $49.95) Martha Harper

NELSON DESIGNER SERIES SHOULDER STRAP REFERENCE BIBLE

What a fantastic idea for a gift—at Christmas or anytime! I wish this had been available when my daughter was a baby and I never seemed to have enough hands to carry everything.

Don't let the word "designer" fool you—this is a very practical King James Version edition of the Bible, with a removable shoulder strap to free your hands for babies, packages, luggage, and a hundred other things in this busy "on-the-go" age. Features include center-column references, words of Christ in red, concordance, pencil/pen holder, flap with magnetic closure, gilded-gold page edges, and many others too numerous to mention.

Available in rich burgundy or taupe, bonded leather in a deluxe gift box, this would be a beautiful and functional gift for mothers, Sunday school teachers, travelers, and anyone who wants to conveniently carry her Bible wherever she goes. I'm sure hoping to find one under
John Wesley to fight the slave trade in force urged on by the Holy Spirit and 48 Fundamentalist Journal studies drawn primarily from the modern Parliament. Some are personal anecdotes world. Some are standard fare; Wilberdevotes the bulk of the volume to case studies such as full-color charts, graphs, or black leatherflex, $9.95; with zipper closure, $12.95) Cindy B. Gunter

JESUS AND ME KID'S CLUB BIBLE

The Jesus and Me Kid's Club Bible is an exciting new edition for children. Available in the New King James version and filled with colorful illustrations, this Bible provides easier reading and understanding for little ones, preschool through third grade. It contains a 32-page dictionary-concordance and a 32-page section that tells what the Bible is and how it came to be, lists great Bible stories and where to find them as well as stories about Jesus and what life was like in Bible times, and includes a Bible time chart. The words of Jesus are in red.

Enclosed in each Bible is a membership card to the Jesus and Me Kid's Club—a worldwide club that encourages the study of Jesus' life. (Thomas Nelson Publishers; 1987; illustrated hardcover, $10.95; blue, burgundy, or white leatherflex, $12.95) Connie Schofer

READER'S COMPANION BIBLE

A Reader's Companion Bible has been produced for ages 9-14. This edition is similar to the Jesus and Me Bible with stories and lessons, but includes extras such as full-color charts, graphs, photos, and maps that help expand kids' understanding of the Bible. (Thomas Nelson Publishers; 1987; white, burgundy, or black leatherflex, $9.95; with zipper closure, $12.95) CBG

MAIN REVIEW

KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

by Charles Colson

Charles Colson has written a fascinating and thought-provoking book about a most relevant topic—the Christian's proper role in politics. After deftly sketching in a theological framework, he devotes the bulk of the volume to case studies drawn primarily from the modern world. Some are standard fare; Wilberforce urged on by the Holy Spirit and John Wesley to fight the slave trade in Parliament. Some are personal anecdotes drawn from Colson's White House years and his prison ministry work around the world. But the strength and interest of this study lies in a third group of examples involving incidents and people not usually cited by so-called popular Christian authors.

Four examples will suffice to show the type of illustrations he develops and some of the guidelines he feels should direct the Christian citizen. For instance, Colson uses pre-World War II Europe to illustrate two common mistakes made by many Christians and their churches. In Germany the churches tended to ignore the criminal activities of Hitler and the Third Reich. Many believed in total separation of church and state, while others allowed themselves to identify German patriotism with the obligations of the gospel. England saw the other horn of the dilemma. Here several devout religious laymen allowed their religious ideals to interfere with their obligations as political leaders. Chamberlain's Unitarian background and the Clive of India section's Christian Science beliefs seriously delayed British rearmament. Both, based on a theology of the nonexistence of evil, failed to appreciate the demonic nature of Hitler and his plans of world conquest.

Even more fascinating are two of Colson's examples of the effective role of church and Christian. He gives the Roman Catholic Church of Poland very high marks for its activities since the Communist takeover after 1945. Priests and laymen, like the leaders of Solidarity, served as the salt and light of that society and government. Colson is also impressed by the recent events in the Philippines. Benigno Aquino became a Christian while a political prisoner of President Marcos. He converted his wife, Cory, and resolved to devote his life to bringing salt and light to his people. After Aquino's death while trying to achieve that mission, Cory took up the call and politically challenged Marcos. She received help from Cardinal Sin, the archbishop of Manila. However, Colson feels that Sin went too far. The church must denounce evil and injustice, but it should not become the backer of any political faction or party, even a Christian one.

Finally Colson devotes a significant portion of the volume to case studies of what can be done by church and Christian at the community level. Here he advocates the formation of small voluntary associations to bring salt and light to their own neighbors. As examples he cites Jerry Falwell's Liberty Godparent Home, MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), and prison ministries of which he has become aware.

If, as I am inclined to believe, Colson is correct about small voluntary associations being the heart of effective Christian witnessing, and if Tocqueville is correct about small voluntary associations being the vital core of American democracy, the job of the Christian citizen is plain and simple: organize, join, and witness. (Zondervan, 1987, 400 pp., $15.95) Homer H. Blass

An excerpt from KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

Those who fear the encroachment of religion in public life can breathe easily. Neither politicized civil religion nor privatized religion is likely to impose itself on our governmental or social institutions, for in either case there is nothing to impose. The one holds the gospel hostage to a particular political agenda while the other is so private it refuses to have any impact on daily life in the public arena. Thus is the divided church impotent to reverse the tides of secularism.

"Collaboration with power, whether Communist or not, is always ruinous for the church. If the church exists, if it is to have legitimacy in the eyes of the people, it must always stand erect as a counter-power to political power."

The mark of true Christian patriotism at work in the kingdoms of man can be found not in frenzied flag-waving, but in service to those in need. Loving God means keeping His Commandments, feeding the hungry, helping the sick, opposing injustice. And when the Christian does so, the results benefit not only those directly aided, but society as a whole.
Christianity Is Not a Spectator Sport
by George Sweet

For millions of Christians who attend Bible-believing churches across America, this simple message is much needed. Many of our churches are suffering from a lack of involvement among their memberships. As a result, outreach, ministry, and impact upon their communities are restricted. How many discouraged pastors have spent their days lamenting that “no one will get involved” and that “my people just don’t care.” The simple truth is this: If our churches are going to be successful in carrying out the Great Commission, we must lead our people to believe that they are a vital part of our local church. Our people need to understand what their gifts are, and seek to use them. They should also be taught that not exercising their gifts and abilities robs them of blessings and limits the effective ministry of their church. We also need to constantly creating new areas of service within our churches. Hospitality committees, Sunday school programs, parking attendants, prayer teams, and outreach teams are just a few areas that can create outlets for involvement. I would suggest some type of new member’s orientation each month, with a ministry survey form given to each new member to help him discover his abilities and interests.

Invested. I personally believe that many of our churches are too timid when it comes to the subject of money and giving. Remember this, an involved Christian is a giving Christian. Jesus put it this way, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21). As a person’s giving grows, very often his involvement grows commensurately. Stewardship campaigns and financial challenges to your people will not only bless them and secure better offerings to do the work of God, but will also “weed out” those individuals and families who are not really committed.

Our Lord said, “Truly, the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few.” Let’s pray together for increased member involvement in our churches, resulting in a greater harvest of souls for our Lord!

George Sweet is pastor of Atlantic Shores Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Sermon Outline

God Sent Forth His Son
Luke 4:18-19

A. To Preach the Gospel (v. 18)
B. To Heal Broken Hearts (v. 18)
C. To Deliver the Captives (v. 18)
D. To Open Blind Eyes (v. 18)
E. To Liberate the Oppressed (v. 19)
F. To Herald the Age of Grace (v. 19)

Word Study

Dektos, “acceptable.” Dektos denotes a person or thing regarded favorably (Luke 4:19, 24; Acts 10:35; 2 Cor. 6:2; Phil. 4:18). It signifies something exceptionally pleasing and to be received heartily. “The acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:19) is language that does not have its roots in the exile, but in the Jewish year of Jubilee. This was always the 50th year after seven sabbatical years. On the first day of this year the priests went through the land proclaiming, with trumpets, “liberty throughout all the land” (Lev. 25:8-17). It was a time when debts were forgiven, and property returned to its original owners. This time of celebration was usually...
called "Yahweh's Year of Grace." Luke 4:19 certainly looks forward to the Age of Grace ushered in by Jesus Christ at His first coming to earth.

God's Plan for Music

Music. A gift from God, the Great Composer and Songwriter, to enjoy and use for His glory. Music can and should function in the church for the same reasons that we assemble as believers—for edification (Heb. 10:24-25), fellowship (Gal. 6:2), exhortation (2 Tim. 4:2), instruction (2 Tim. 4:2), and evangelism (1 Chron. 16:24, 31). Music is a means to these ends.

There are scriptural principles in the Old and New Testaments important to the role of music in the assembly of God's people. In Paul's letters to the churches he said that we are to speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5:19, 20). In Colossians 3:16 various musical expressions are given as a means of letting the "word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" by teaching and admonishing one another with these songs. The musical emphasis throughout the Old and New Testaments is on the content or words of the songs, not on the music itself. The music ought to support and enhance the text, not distract from or overpower it.

Our attention should be directed to the Lord through the message of the song. For some, music is useful in creating an atmosphere of worship before the service, while the pastor is praying, or during the final invitation. For others, music covers the clang of coins in the offering plate or the shuffle of children exiting to junior church. For the Sunday morning sleepheads, music keeps them from snoring too much. Still others believe music is the great filler of the one-hour service. Those who see music in this way have not learned or experienced its value. They have not begun to tap the wealth of rich expressions in our hymnbooks. They sing the same favorite songs week after week, year after year. They have not discovered how easy it is to memorize Scripture by singing Scripture songs. Their musical diet is limited to fast-food hamburgers, when they could be feasting on "manna of a bountiful supply.'"

In the Old Testament we have a model for the use of music in the assembly of God's people. This musical ministry was the command of God (2 Chron. 29:25). Skillful, godly leaders were appointed (1 Chron. 15:16-24). Instruction and rehearsals were given (1 Chron. 15:22). Musicians were appointed, not volunteers (1 Chron. 25:7; 15:16-22). Performances were organized and orderly (1 Chron. 16:37-42). Musical instruments of many kinds were used (1 Chron. 15:16-22, 28; 16:42; 23:5). Choirs were robed (1 Chron. 15:27). Hymnbooks were used (the Book of Psalms). Music was scheduled and assignments made for each day (1 Chron. 16:37-38). The predominant theme and mood of their music was joyful giving of thanks and praise to God (Psalms). Their worship in song was blessed with the glory of God filling the temple (2 Chron. 5:13-14). Their music was a testimony to their ungodly neighbors (Neh. 12:27-43). They spoke honestly of their personal struggles and feelings. Content was both objective and subjective in nature (Psalms).

Think of the potential of a music ministry in our churches with the blessing of God upon it. We marvel at the beauty and variety of music today, but someday we will experience it in all of its original perfection and glory in the presence of our Saviour! In the meantime, let us bring "glory in the church" with our music.

Keith Currie

Taking Advantage of the Housing Allowance

When Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17), He was talking about the insignificance of Caesar's claim over the lives of men relative to that of God. However, the passage also implies that we err in giving government what could be used for ministry. Many pastors are guilty of overpaying their income taxes because they do not understand the system.

In 1983 the IRS ruled that a minister could no longer take advantage of a valuable deduction—the "double dip" on mortgage interest. Prior to the ruling, members of the clergy could include interest or a home loan as part of their housing allowance, which effectively excluded the sum from taxation. They could deduct the same funds the second time by listing the interest as an itemized deduction on Schedule A of their tax return.

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 has reversed the 1983 ruling. Once again, pastors and evangelists will be able to legally reduce their taxes using this provision.
An additional benefit of the latest change is that it is retroactive. If you could have taken advantage of this break, you can amend your tax returns for the past three years and receive a refund for the amount of taxes paid on your home mortgage interest.

To take advantage of the housing allowance for 1988, follow these guidelines.

Get started now. Designation of the housing allowance must be made in advance. Retroactive designation will not work. Evangelists who are paid by different congregations can have each church designate a portion of their honorarium as a housing allowance.

Keep complete records. All expenses of purchasing and maintaining your home are deductible. These include not only mortgage payments, real estate taxes, and homeowner's insurance, but several items that are frequently overlooked. The costs of such everyday expenses as utilities, cleaning, repairs, maintenance, landscaping, appliances, and furnishings all fall within the limits of the law. For new purchases, the amount of the down payment, title insurance, bank and legal fees, and other "closing costs" are covered by the housing allowance.

Aim high. If you spend more than you have estimated in advance, the deductions are lost forever. Come up with a reasonable estimate and then increase it by 10 to 20 percent to cover items you may have missed. Any unused portion of the allowance should be included as "other income" when you file your tax return. The only limitation here is that the total of the payments, closing costs, insurance, repairs, and maintenance cannot exceed the fair rental value of the home—equal to 1 percent of the appraised value per month.

To learn more about how to reduce your taxes, send $5 to Robert A. Grunow Associates and ask for their latest clergy tax tape. The address is 2286 Augusta Drive, Spring Hill, Florida 33526.

Paul Barringer, certified financial planner.

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O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting Light—
The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary—And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep Their watch of wond'ring love.

O morning stars, together Proclaim the holy birth,
And praises sing to God the King, And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts The blessings of His heav'n.
No ear may hear His coming, But, in this world of sin, Where meek souls will receive Him still The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in—Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!
Sound in the Church

In the Old Testament, we have Solomon’s example of how to undertake a church’s physical structure. He used the best masonry, timber, and metal-working available. We try to do the same thing today, utilizing the best materials available within the budget. We accept building industry standards of cost per square foot of structure, cost per square yard of asphalt parking lot, and so forth. The only place we consistently violate the rule is in church sound systems, the very vehicle for conveying God’s Word to the congregation.

Three basic categories describe our Fundamentalist pastors today as they attempt to purchase sound systems.

- They want to obtain good sound. Due to lack of expertise and experience, they fall victim to vendors of questionable ability and intent, thereby obtaining substandard results at unfortunately high prices.
- They want to obtain good sound, and do, but at exorbitant prices.
- They don’t really care, and subject their members to sound quality that would not be tolerated in secular facilities.

There are estimates that the amount of money wasted since 1980 by Fundamentalist churches on misguided audio purchases and overcharges is sufficient to have put a Bible in every home in China. This situation seriously questions our stewardship.

Realizing that the public’s standards for sound quality have increased dramatically is also important. Recent technical advances such as the compact disc have raised people’s awareness of sound quality. Most church members hear better sound quality from their car stereo systems driving to and from church than they hear in the church itself.

We need to understand that the church is in competition with the world. Most visitors are prospects for salvation or membership, but a disproportionate number of them come only once. We strive to make the church a pleasant and enjoyable place to visit. We try to have comfortable pews, air conditioning, good lighting, and attractive decor. High quality sound, especially when it enhances the music portion of the service, is equally important. If we can keep visitors coming back a few more times, we proportionately increase our chances of leading them to Christ and discipling them.

Professional sound system technology has exploded in the last few years, with products and services that can be of great benefit to the church, and that can be obtained at a reasonable cost. The remaining 10 articles in this series are designed to advise pastors of sound system technology in the church and to guide them through the perils of the professional audio marketplace.

John Westra

For specific help with church sound system questions, call John Westra at 800/222-6460.

Church News

The 45th annual convention of National Religious Broadcasters is scheduled for January 30 through February 3, 1988, at the Sheraton Washington Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Special speakers include Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, Chuck Swindoll, Jack Hayford, and Robert Cook. Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and many others have been invited to participate.

“NRB: Accountable to God and Man—45 Years of Service and Integrity,” will offer five full days of plenaries, workshops, seminars, music, and receptions. For further information, write National Religious Broadcasters, CN 1926, Morristown, New Jersey 07960 or call 201-428-5400.

The General Council of Baptist Mid-Missions announces the appointment of Gary Anderson as executive vice president. Anderson will serve in this new position as chief operating officer.

He is totally committed to New Testament missions having served on the Baptist Mid-Missions Advisory Council. He has 12 years pastoral experience and has served as chairman of the trustees of Baptist Bible College of Pennsylvania. His training includes a master of divinity from Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, Pennsylvania, and a bachelor of arts from Bob Jones University.

An interesting note. The world premiere of a major new composition, the Oratorio, Book of Revelation by the American composer Loris Tjeknavorian, took place in Carnegie Hall, New York, November 15. The Oratorio is the complete setting of all 22 chapters of the Book of Revelation using the King James Version of the Bible.

The work was performed in English by a mixed choir of 120 professionals (the New York Choral Artists, prepared by Joseph Flium) and the American Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra was so interested in being associated with the Oratorio that the performance was promoted in addition to their regular subscription series. The performance lasted over five hours and was divided into two concerts: afternoon (chapters 1-13) and evening (chapters 14-22).

Loris Tjeknavorian is an exclusive recording artist with RCA and a conductor who appears regularly with many of the world’s leading orchestras. His work has always been strongly influenced by his faith and upbringing. He says that no matter how technically he was prepared, he could not have composed the Oratorio—which was 10 years in planning and composing—if he had not been guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit.
Jim Mehaffie was driving past an abortion clinic in his hometown of Dayton, Ohio, when he and his 28-year-old son, David, noticed that only one person was protesting the "killing of unborn children."

"Dad," David said, "that shouldn't be."

"I wholeheartedly agreed with him," said the elder Mehaffie.

So he and his son called their friends and church members and asked them if they would picket the Dayton Women's Health Center.

"From the start," he said, "we had 40 to 60 people show up."

Picketing twice a week, for two hours on Tuesday and Saturday mornings, the new group of demonstrators immediately employed a graphic artist to construct their protest signs.

"We had one sign that read, 'Honk if you love babies.' Well the people in the clinic certainly didn't like that sign. The honking reminded them that somebody cares."

But after six months of protesting, Mehaffie was doubting whether the demonstrations were doing any "real" good. "We were greatly discouraged. My son and I didn't see any tangible signs that we were being effective. Then the next day after talking about this we got a lawsuit."

A $1.5 million lawsuit.

"Praise the Lord, I thought. We got their attention."

The lawsuit, filed by two doctors at the Dayton clinic, charged six of the demonstrators (including Mehaffie and his son) with disrupting their business. The suit accused the demonstrators of screaming at the patients, blocking access to the clinic, making harassing phone calls, and lying down in front of cars.

"We'd be crazy to lie down in front of their cars. They [clinic personnel] have even tried to hit us on the sidewalk," said Mehaffie, who also denied the other charges.

"Immediately we started looking for a Christian attorney, one who was willing to stand with us through anything—regardless of the cost." The Mehaffies found two attorneys—one in Dayton, the other in Cincinnati.

"At issue here is the constitutional right to peacefully protest," said Dayton attorney, David Haffey. The Mehaffies won the first legal battle. The abortion clinic dropped its $1.5 million request for monetary damages. It seems the abortion clinic failed to post bonds in case they damaged the defendants. Without bonds, the monetary portion of the suit was rendered "null and void."

But this did not affect the abortion clinic's request to restrict the activities of the protestors. According to the Dayton health clinic, the protestors were violating the "privacy rights" of the women going into the clinic and the clinic employees in a number of ways. First, by coercing a woman to keep her child, the demonstrators were interfering with her right to choose abortion. Second, the "extreme verbal harassment" may increase the level of anxiety within a patient, which may complicate the abortion process. Finally, the "unreasonable intimidation of physicians" could "cause them to refuse to perform legal abortions."

Judge John Meagher, of the Montgomery County Court of Common Pleas, ruled in favor of the abortion clinic. Without explanation, the court issued a
permanent injunction restricting the activities of the pro-life protestors in a dozen ways. Among them, the court limited the picketers to the front of the clinic and restricted their number to 10. Abortion clinic personnel are now careful to monitor the number of protestors.

"They'll even come out of the clinic and take pictures," Mehaffie said. "They'll take pictures of our babies, trying to count them as part of the 10. Apparently, the baby counts if it's on the picket line, but not in the womb."

The judge's order further forbids the protestors from blocking access to the clinic or its driveway, and forbids them to construct a sign "urging motorists to honk" for life. They are forbidden from "speaking, chanting, yelling or verbally communicating in any manner" to "the staff or patients or volunteers" at the clinic. The protestors are even forbidden to park "on the west side of South Dixie Drive within the viewing distance of the Dayton Women's Health Center," or to park in viewing distance of any clinic personnel's home.

The court defined picketing as any person "carrying protest and informational signs, passing out literature, speaking publicly, or otherwise engaged in activity intended to inform, influence, and persuade the public about matters of public interest, including abortion."

The ruling is considered one of the toughest and most restrictive rulings against pro-life protestors in the country. Usually such restrictive orders are against protestors who have been arrested for criminal trespassing or committing some type of destruction to clinic property. But in the Dayton case, no one has even been charged with criminal activity against the Dayton Women's Center, much less arrested.

"The ruling has taken away our civil rights. The whole thing is ridiculous," Mehaffie said. Even the American Civil Liberties Union has opposed parts of the order.

Agreeing that the court has a right to restrict the activity of the protestors at the clinic (in order not to infringe on the patient's right to an abortion), the ACLU disagrees with the order prohibiting the demonstrators from protesting outside the homes of the physicians or clinic employees. "Here there is no direct threat to the operation of the clinic or the health of its patients."

The ACLU also protests the court's order that restricts the language on the demonstrators' signs. "Above all else," the ACLU cited in its legal brief, "the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its subject matter, or its content."

The ACLU also opposed the court's order that the protestors not picket or park "within viewing distance of the clinic or the homes of its employees." Such a broad restriction could prevent the demonstrators from even parking to attend a business or visit a relative within the area surrounding the clinic or its employees' homes.

Attorneys for the Mehaffies, who were unwilling to discuss the case publicly due to certain laws and code of ethics, are appealing the lawsuit. Meanwhile, the Mehaffies and their friends continue to protest the clinic's abortions every Tuesday and Saturday.

"When we first started, there was an average of 15 girls a day going into the clinic to get an abortion. Now the clinic averages only 6 to 8 girls a day," Mehaffie said.

The clinic (along with local feminist groups) has attempted to retaliate against the Mehaffies by protesting their pie business in Dayton. Carrying such signs as "Buy a pie, terrorize a woman," the pro-abortion picketers hope to cut into the profits of Mehaffie's Pies.

"Our business increased 30 percent," Mehaffie said. "The Lord took care of that for us."
United Methodists Include “Mother God” Songs in New Hymnal

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (RNS)—Pledged to produce a hymnal that embraces as many Methodists as possible, the United Methodist church’s controversial hymnal committee agreed September 25 to include two songs that refer to God as “Mother.” After two days of sharp discussion the committee voted to include “How Can We Name a Love” and “Wonder of Wonders” in a proposed hymnal that will have 625 hymns, all of which refer to God in masculine or genderless terms. Both of the newly approved hymns were written by British poet Brian Wren, who stands on the cutting edge of a trend of hymnwriting that uses feminine imagery for God.

USA Today Poll: People Are Religious Because ‘It Feels Good’

(RNS)—“Peace of mind” and “spiritual well-being” are the most important things that Americans find in their religious faith today, according to a survey taken by the Gordon S. Black Corporation for USA Today. Of the 849 adults questioned in the poll, 56 percent said they attend religious services at least several times a month. Of those, 45 percent said they go because it’s “good for you,” and 26 percent attend “for pleasure.”

Stiff Measures Adopted to Withhold Funds from Religious Groups

A Wisconsin state board that helps fund programs to prevent adolescent pregnancies has adopted stiff measures to make sure none of its monies goes to religious groups.

Responding to a request by Attorney General Don Hanaway, the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Services Board said it will withhold funds from groups even if its board members are from the same religious denomination.

The board’s controversy over funding religious groups began when Rosalie Minor, a Milwaukee group affiliated with the Roman Catholic church, requested a $42,000 grant.

When the board asked the attorney general whether such grants were permissible, Hanaway responded by saying “The board may not constitutionally provide funding to pervasively sectarian organizations or to any other organization that engages in a specifically religious activity.”

The board responded a week later by saying it would not grant any funds to: a parochial school, church, or synagogue; a group whose board members answer to a religious authority; a group whose majority board is of a specific religious orientation; a group whose majority board is of a specific religious orientation; a group whose counseling or teaching activities are restricted to a religious doctrine.

Needless to say, Rosalie Manor was denied the grant.

Scripture Verse to Be Removed

School officials in Portland, Maine, have already agreed to remove an “offensive” biblical passage from a school auditorium, but it may not be soon enough for a local attorney.

The inscription above the stage at Portland High School reads, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God. A workman that needeth not to be ashamed. Rightly dividing the word of truth. II Timothy 2:15.”

Portland attorney Seth Berner brought the inscription to the attention of school officials last spring. He said he saw the passage while attending a performance at the school last New Year’s Eve.

Assistant Superintendent of Schools David LeGage said school officials were more than willing to remove the Scripture, which he believed served no practical purpose. “It was not an issue for us,” LeGage told UPI.

LeGage said school authorities plan to remove the inscription in the summer when the school is scheduled to undergo a $20 million renovation.

Berner, however, wants action sooner and suggested school authorities at least cover the passage until it can be dutifully removed. He also suggested that students be given a course in the separation of church and state to combat the religious indoctrination they have received through exposure to the passage.

Assistant Superintendent LeGage, however, plans to stick to his guns and wait until the summer to take action against the inscription. “It will be removed during renovations,” he said. “We have no intent to offend anyone.”

DC May Retreat on AIDS Law

The U.S. Senate has passed an amendment to overturn a controversial “gay rights” law in the District of Columbia. The Senate amendment, passed 55-44, will freeze all spending by the District unless it repeals a law prohibiting insurance companies from testing for the deadly AIDS virus.

The DC law was supported by the city’s strong homosexual lobby. Homosexuals complained that testing for the AIDS virus was discriminatory toward “gays.”

Health and life insurance groups opposed the law saying a ban on AIDS testing would result in increased insurance rates for its policyholders.

Passed in 1986, the law resulted in dozens of insurance companies refusing to write premiums within the city. Efforts to combat the DC law was championed by Senator Jesse Helms, who gained the support of life insurance groups and 600 Baptist ministers within the city. The ministers complained that many of their members were unable to purchase life insurance.

The Senate amendment must still pass a House-Senate conference. If it remains intact, the city will have until
December 31 to repeal the “gay rights” law.

An Unconstitutional Constitution?

Yes, having students recite Rhode Island’s state constitution is unconstitutional, claims the American Civil Liberties Union.

A school committee has passed a resolution in Cranston that calls for the formation of a study committee to determine whether reciting the state’s preamble to the constitution is legal.

But the ACLU has already offered its opinion.

“There’s no question in my mind that it’s blatantly unconstitutional,” ACLU Director Steven Brown told UPI.

The one-sentence preamble reads:

“We, the people of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, grateful to Almighty God for the civil and religious liberty which He hath so long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for a blessing upon our endeavors to secure and to transmit the same, unimpaired, to succeeding generations, do ordain and establish this Constitution of government.”

Defending the reading, School Committee Chairman Joseph Medeiros, Jr., said, “I think the students should learn their constitution. How far do we go? Should we take all coins from them because they say, ‘In God We Trust’?”

Homosexual to Parents: ‘We Shall Sodomize Your Sons.’

Better to report this item late than never.

Almost one year after publication, The New American uncovered a startling statement from the Boston-based homosexual publication, Gay Community News.

Written by the self-described “gay revolutionary,” Michael Swift, the statement reads:

“We shall sodomize your sons, emblems of your feeble masculinity, of your shallow dreams and vulgar lies. We shall seduce them in your schools, in your dormitories, in your gymnasiums, in your locker rooms, in your sports arenas, in your seminaries, in your truck stops, in your all-male clubs, in your houses of Congress, wherever men are with men together.

“Your sons shall become our minions and do our bidding. They will be recast in our image. They will come to crave and adore us...”

“If you dare cry faggot, fairy, queer at us, we will stab you in your cowardly hearts... All churches who condemn us will be closed. Our only gods are handsome young men...

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The Triumph of Robert H. Bork

by Truman Dollar

While the U.S. Senate's refusal to confirm Judge Robert H. Bork as a justice to the U.S. Supreme Court is unjust and preposterous, it is not the great American tragedy the media play it to be. Conservatives, both religious and political, just need better perspective and focus.

The failure of the distinguished jurist to achieve his life's goal, by only 16 Senate votes, is a bitter personal disappointment, but there is a positive side to the story. Let's add up the score.

The debate on his nomination by the full Senate, which Bork wisely demanded, will record his impressive credentials for a position on the High Court for all future generations. Conservative senators simply added layers of support to former Chief Justice Warren Burger's unqualified endorsement of Bork.

All of America now knows about Bork's outstanding background as U.S. Solicitor General, law professor at Yale, and judge of the District of Columbia Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals. Now the record shows that the American Bar Association gave him his highest rating, and that it gave him the same rating when he was named to the Court of Appeals. His place in history is permanently secured, perhaps even more firmly than if he had been confirmed. Now, as a living conservative folk hero, he will be taken seriously for the rest of his life. He is no A.G. Haruth Carswell or Clement Haynsworth, whose nominations were tainted by presidential cronyism. There was no effort to slip his appointment by an unsuspecting Senate. Newsweek is dead wrong when it speculates that Bork may become just a "footnote" in history.

Bork's confirmation hearings gave him the opportunity to clarify the contemporary and historical role of the Supreme Court. The hearings became a giant national classroom where Bork, the teacher, explained the concept of "judicial restraint." He demonstrated wisdom and skill as he reminded the nation that legislators make the laws and the Supreme Court interprets them.

Bork's Senate hearings widely published his integrity and soundly embarrassed his critics. The American people wearied of stern moral lectures from the hero of Chappaquiddick Island and the plagiarist from Delaware.

The battle to restructure the Supreme Court has not been lost. One more Conservative on the High Court will complete that shift, guaranteeing a majority on most issues that concern us. The President can nominate a dozen men. Remember, Reagan will inevitably appoint a justice to the Supreme Court, and his views on major constitutional issues will essentially be those of Judge Bork. The Senate cannot deny the President that. The Constitution gives him that responsibility, and the American people will never let the Democrats take it from him. We are a nation of fair-minded people who are committed to the Constitution. The Democrats would guarantee a Republican President and Senate in 1988 if they tried to permanently abort a Reagan nominee. The courts would also act swiftly to protect Reagan's presidential prerogative.

A new Conservative justice will force liberal politicians to test their adventurous social reforms in the Congress, where men face election every two years. Legalizing abortion, banning prayer in schools, creating sweeping new "rights" for criminals, and imposing job quotas have never faced congressional votes. Don't expect quick miracles from the Supreme Court, but things will be different.

We should not forget that by the end of his term in January 1989, Reagan likely will have chosen more than half the nation's U.S. District Court judges—men and women with lifetime tenures, whose public policy roles will continue far beyond Reagan's own.

I predict that future generations will say that Robert Bork was the intellectual leader of the assault team that was sacrificed to secure important ground in the battle for judicial restraint. We may be sure that he will not suffer the painful anonymity of the Vietnam dead. We will hear from the judge again and again and again. He may become to the Supreme Court what John Madden is to the National Football League. We will soon enshrine him as a hero in the crucial battle for traditional American values.

At this Christmas season, while others dream of prancing reindeer and sugarplum fairies, I fantasize about politics. Would it not be fascinating if Judge Bork resigned from the District of Columbia Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals, established his residency in Massachusetts, and then entered a race for the U.S. Senate against Ted Kennedy? He probably would not win, since the Massachusetts electorate believes in the "Divine Right of Kennedys," but it would be the greatest show since the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Now wouldn't that be "special?"
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