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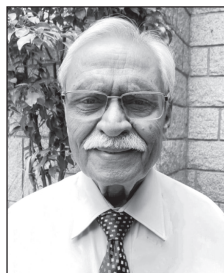
No. 12

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

AS MANY OF YOU AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE PUT ON CHRIST

AFTER STATING, FOR YOU ARE ALL sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, in Galatians 3:26, the apostle in the next verse said, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The use of "as many of you," means that any who might not have been baptized into Christ were not in Christ. The metaphor is that of putting on a garment, and the wearer is identified with what he puts on. The one in Christ is a Christian. In Christ one becomes a new person. And when this happens, the old distinctions pass away. When one is in Christ, the status of Christ becomes his. Baptism is a dying to old habits and life, and putting on of the new man, which is Christ. The forgiveness of sins is in Christ, not outside of Christ. Speaking of Christ, Colossians 3:14 says "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. The apostle Peter had told those who had asked, after hearing Christ's gospel of salvation, "what shall we do?" "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2: 37, 38). The remission or the forgiveness of sins is in Christ, and to get into Christ one must be baptized. There is no other way. Just as Naaman, about whom we read in the Old Testament book of 2 Kings chapter 5, was told by the prophet Elisha to go to river Jordan and wash in it seven times to get rid of his leprosy. The Bible says, "But Naaman became



furious, and went away and said, "Indeed I said to myself, 'he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.' Are not the Abanah and the pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleaned?" So he turned and went away in a rage." (2 Kings 5:11, 12). But Naaman was not cleansed of his leprosy, as the record says, until he repented, changed his mind, and went back to the river Jordan and dipped himself in it seven times, as the prophet had told him to do. We read, "So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." (2 Kings 5:14). Naaman humbled himself and accepted to do what he was told to do by God through His messenger. Aren't there plenty of people today who claim to believe in Christ, and think that on that basis they are Christians, but at the same time, scoff and make fun of Christ's command, when they are told that He has said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." They need to heed Christ's warning: "He who rejects me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him, the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48).

Ideally, to put on Christ through baptism is to become Christ-like. One becomes so identified with Christ, after being baptized into Christ, that he is a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17). But Christ like characteristics were never acquired suddenly. Years after their conversion, the apostle Paul was still admonishing the Philippian Christians to have the mind of Christ. (Philippians 2:5). Baptism is not a magical rite which automatically makes men perfect. After being baptized into Christ, one should try to walk in the footsteps of Christ daily, to attain His characteristics. (1 Peter 2:21).

But someone might say, "Not everyone who is baptized is saved." Such an erroneous view is due to a misunderstanding of the pre-requirements of baptism, that is, faith or belief in Christ, and repentance of sins. (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Any individual being immersed (baptized) without those vital prerequisites to baptism is not baptized at all, but merely got wet. It is true, there may be those who have thus been immersed without being baptized, but while that is true enough, it does not alter the truth: some are immersed without being saved, but no one was ever saved without being Scripturally baptized, because Christ Himself has said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mark 16:16)

SINGING

J.C. Choate



CHRISTIANITY IS A UNIQUE religion inasmuch as it is a singing religion. The Bible teaches that singing is an act of worship. Therefore, one of the primary purposes of the Lord's people assembling on the first day of the week is so that they may sing praises to God.

The apostle Paul says, "...speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). What is Paul saying? He is saying that this is to be a group singing, that it is to be group participation, or congregational singing. Furthermore, he is pointing out that each one is to speak to the other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs are all just different kinds of songs. However, all of them must be spiritual in nature, with the ability to draw one closer to the Lord. But how is the melody to be made? It is to be made in the heart. And to whom is it to be directed? To man, or to the Lord? To the Lord, of course.

Another similar statement is also made by Paul, when he says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). There is just one thing that needs particular attention in this verse, and that is that Paul says that we are to teach and admonish one another through our singing. Singing, then, is for the purpose of glorifying and worshipping the Lord, teaching and exhorting those who are present, and in order to inspire and build up those who are participating.

There is one all-important question that always arises when singing is discussed, and that is, should mechanical music be used in conjunction with the singing? The answer is no, but we'll want to notice some arguments for mechanical music, and then show you by the scriptures that they are insufficient to prove the point.

First, we must understand that God once had a law, the law of Moses, but in due time he took it out of the way in order to give a new and better law through Christ. Under the first law mechanical music was permitted, but also there were animal sacrifices and many other things common to that time. Under the new law a new plan of worship was given and it called for singing. But someone is ready to say, "But it doesn't say **not** to use mechanical music." But it does, inasmuch as it tells us what to do and that eliminates the other acts. The very fact that singing is

commanded does away with the idea of mechanical music. For example, we are told to partake of unleavened bread in remembrance of the body of Christ and the fruit of the vine in remembrance of the blood of Christ. Now one might say, "But it doesn't say **not** to use cake and Coca-Cola for partaking the Lord's Supper so I'll use those." But it does tell us what to use, and that would automatically eliminate cake and Coca-Cola.

Going further, the Lord would have his creation to worship him instead of something that we have created. In this way he is glorified. If we worshipped him with our inventions then we would be honored. That is why the Hebrew writer said, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the **fruit of our lips** giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

As we have already noted, Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 says specifically that the melody is to be made in the heart, not on some mechanical instrument. The argument might be made that in the Urdu language, for instance, it says to sing and **play**. Yes, but even Urdu scholars will admit that this scripture has been mistranslated, and is even wrong according to Urdu grammar. In the Greek originals, to which we must always return when translations are questioned, only singing is commanded.

Another says, "But we like it." Well, we may like many things but that doesn't mean that we can bring them into worship. "What about music in heaven?" My friend, we are not in heaven now, so we'll have to be content for the present with what the Lord has asked us to do on the earth. But regardless, no earthly thing will be in heaven so we can be sure that no mechanical music will be there.

There are many arguments offered for mechanical music in worship but none of them will stand under the tests of the scriptures. Mechanical music may be good and fine in the home, at a wedding, etc., but the Lord has not commanded it in worship, therefore we must leave it off. In all of these verses of scripture that mention singing in the New Testament, no where is included or suggested the use of mechanical music. So why do people use it and why do people want it? Because they have seen others use it and they think it is the thing to do. They never question whether it is right or wrong. But each one should study his Bible for himself and see what it teaches. If it teaches the use of mechanical music in worship then go ahead and use it. If it does not teach it then leave it off, or else be damned (Revelation 22:18, 19).

Christians are to sing. All admit this. And all admit that the Lord may be worshipped without mechanical music. Why take a chance? Be on the safe side. Do only that which you know is right.

WHAT IS THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH?

Arthur Pigman

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH is the church that Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18 to build: *“And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*

Many have the mistaken idea that the church is a structure made of brick, block, mortar, steel, and wood. In Acts 20:28 we read that Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. But neither here nor any other place in the New Testament is the word “church” used to describe a building.

The Greek word “ekklesia” is the term translated “church” in the New Testament. That word meant “assembly,” and the type of assembly was determined by how it was used. The addition of such words as “of God,” or “of the Lord,” or “of Christ” tells us more about the type of assembly. In Acts 20:28 it has the phrase *“which he purchased.”* This makes it clear that the assembly belongs to Christ, because He bought it with His own blood.

The New Testament tells us all about the church. It reveals the plan of salvation, the organization of the church, the worship of the church, and the work of the church. Let us all strive to learn what the “Book” teaches, and then follow it. *“If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God...”*

What “Honoring Father” Implies

Garell L Forehand

WE ARE ALL CHILDREN. We got here, in part, because of a father and a mother. In this brief study we’d like to look at the implications of obeying the command, *“Honor your father.”*

Appreciate His Work. Paul wrote that Christians should render honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7). That should at least include our earthly fathers. Children should honor their fathers for their work’s sake. It isn’t always easy for a father to fulfill his responsibilities to family. There is tremendous pressure that goes along with all the effort in being a father. Paul wrote, *“If any man does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). It costs a great deal of money to raise a child to adulthood today. Often it becomes very difficult for fathers

to make ends meet in that process. Many fathers do without some important things in order to make sure their children are provided with all they need. When was the last time you told your father “thanks” for all he’s done for you?

Accept His Will. That just describes obedience to one’s father. This command applies to those children who still live under the supervision and authority of their parents. The Bible says, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right*” (Ephesians 6:1). Sons and daughters should submit to the will of their father because God designed the father to be the head (or leader) of the home. Not only is this submission right in the sight of God, but it is also in the child’s best interest (Proverbs 6:20-23).

Ask His Wisdom. Even after children have grown and begun their own families, the wisdom of their fathers should still be actively sought. Watch the age hint concerning the parents in the following verse. “*Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old*” (Proverbs 23:22). Seek your father’s advice on many things. Give him the encouragement (and yourself the benefit) of asking for his experience and understanding. Don’t ignore his wisdom. He has been where you can’t possibly have yet visited, due to age and experience differences.

Allow His Weaknesses. Let your father be human, too! Hold him in esteem even when you know of mistakes. Don’t remove him from your heart’s pedestal because of his frailties. We all sin and fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). Love will cover a multitude of sins.

Attend His Wants. Yes, fathers have needs, too! Be sensitive. Due to the influence of our world, fathers don’t often ask for much help — especially from their children. We need to keep our eyes open to the needs. It is wrong to neglect the needs of parents, especially when they are old (Matthew 19:17-20).

What Have They Seen In Your House?

Bobby Dockery

KING HEZEKIAH WAS A good man who made a bad mistake. When the king of Babylon sent messengers to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery from a near-death illness, Hezekiah treated them like honored guests. He welcomed them into his house and showed them all the treasures which had been accumulated over the centuries by the kings

of Judah. Hearing of this, the prophet Isaiah came to Hezekiah with a searching question: “....*What have they seen in your house....?*” (2 Kings 20:15). Hezekiah was warned that the day would come when the Babylonians’ lust for the treasures they had seen would bring them back. The nation would be overthrown, and all the king’s treasures would be carried away to Babylon. Hezekiah’s own children and grandchildren would become captives in chains. In pridefully showing off his possessions, Hezekiah had sown the seeds which would bring down his house.

The question, “What have they seen in your house?” is one which many fathers might well ponder today. Like Hezekiah, many are allowing things to be seen which will lead to tragedy, and the treasures they are in danger of losing are spiritual ones of eternal value! Consider...

1. Fathers, what have other people seen in your house? Our friends and neighbors take note of what goes on in our homes. It is vital that they see evidence of Christ’s influence there! The Bible says, “*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them glorify God....*” (1 Peter 2:12). Christian principles must be given priority in the home. How tragic that in so many homes today the influence of Christ is not easily seen.

2. Fathers, what have your children seen in your house? Even the smallest children have big eyes. They see much and forget little. The things they witness in the home may mark them for all eternity. What do they see??? **They may see sexual immorality.** The number of couples living together without marriage is a national scandal. Many children see a steady parade of live-in boyfriends or girlfriends which their mothers or fathers bring home. **They may see abuse and violence.** The #1 killer of children under five is child abuse. As many as 15 million women are battered in the home each year. **They may see pornography.** Dirty books, lewd magazines, and sexually-explicit videos have become common fare in many homes. Innocent minds are brutalized and corrupted by the vile things which parents bring into the home. **They may see alcohol and drugs.** Millions of homes are being torn apart by drinking and drug abuse. All too soon, our children will leave home to make their way in the world. They will either go equipped for life or victimized and vulnerable to the temptations which will assail them. It largely depends on what they see at home!

3. Fathers, what does God see in your house? All of life is lived every day in the presence of God (Hebrews 4:12). We may hide what goes on in our house from the eyes of our neighbors and, to some

extent, even from our children. But we cannot hide from God! And some day we will be judged in righteousness on the basis of what God has seen in our homes (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

God, others, your children — **“What have they seen in your house?”** The answer will matter for all eternity.

The Stranger We Took In

A FEW MONTHS BEFORE I was born, my Dad met a stranger who was new to our small Tennessee town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer, and soon invited him to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted and was around to welcome me into the world a few months later.

As I grew up I never questioned his place in our family. In my young mind each member had a special niche. My brother, Bill, five years my senior, was my example. Fran, my younger sister gave me the opportunity to play “big brother” and to develop the art of teasing. My parents were complimentary instructors — Mom taught me to love the Word of God and Dad taught me to obey it.

But, the stranger was our storyteller. He could weave the most fascinating tales. Adventures, mysteries, and comedies were daily conversations. He would hold our entire family spellbound for hours each evening.

If I wanted to know all about politics, history, or science, he knew it all. He knew about the past, understood the present, and seemingly could predict the future. The pictures he could draw were so full of life that I would often laugh or cry as I watched.

He was like a friend to the whole family. He took Dad, Bill, and me to our first major league baseball game. He was always encouraging us to see movies, and he even made arrangements to introduce us to several movie stars. My brother and I were deeply impressed by John Wayne in particular.

The stranger was an incessant talker. Dad didn’t seem to mind, but sometimes Mom would quietly get up, while the rest of us were enthralled with one of his stories of faraway places. Mom would go to her room, read her Bible, and pray. I wonder if she ever prayed that the stranger would leave.

You see, my Dad ruled our household with certain moral conditions and convictions, yet somehow this stranger never felt obligated to honor them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our house — not from us, from our friends, or from adults. Our long term visitor, however, used occasional four letter words that burned my ears and made Dad

squirm. To my knowledge the stranger was never confronted.

My Dad was a tee-totaler who didn't permit alcohol in his home, but the stranger felt we needed exposure. He didn't actually ever give us any alcohol, but he constantly tried to enlighten us to other ways of life. He covered the gusto side of life with beer and other alcoholic beverages.

He talked freely (probably much too freely) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive, and generally embarrassing. I know now that my early concepts of the man-woman relationship were influenced by the stranger.

As I look back, I believe it was the grace of God and what we had been taught in church and Sunday school that kept the stranger from deceiving us. Time after time he opposed the moral values of the Bible. Yet no one said much about it, and no one wanted him to leave.

More than thirty years have passed since the stranger first moved in with our family. To be honest I found a stranger like him and took him into my own home. Now they both sit in the den of my parents home and in my home. He waits patiently for someone to listen to him talk, and you look at him as he talks.

His name? ... We always called him by his initials: T.V.

— Selected

BUILDING ACCORDING TO PLUMB

Michael L. King

HAVE YOU WONDERED WHY it seems that elements of our society are at odds with each other? Why are families characterized by chaos and competition? Individual and personal crises plague many to the devaluation of self-worth, and church members all too often are at a standoff. One could easily be reminded of those in the ancient city of Athens who were “*very religious*” people who were seeking the Lord, but in all the wrong places (Acts 17:22-29).

There was a time when Israel struggled to keep their spiritual perspective. They stooped to base behavior and embraced pagan and heathenistic gods who gave notoriety to most any conduct imaginable! God made His law known, using the great man of God, Amos, to serve as spokesman. Amos declared, “.... *the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more*” (Amos 7:7,8).

For many years and in many lands the plumbline has been used as a standard or rule in determining perpendicular or “uprightness.”

A plumbline is suspended from “above,” extending from a “higher source” to which everything else is relatively constructed. In Amos 7:16 Amos said, *“Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord....”* Dear friend, the source from which the “plumbline” of righteousness is suspended is God. The line which extends into the midst of man is His Word. When man establishes his life in agreement with the extended Word, his life will be upright and in harmony with all others who are building similarly. When a person’s life or teaching contradicts or transgresses (goes against) the standard, his life can be classified as disorderly, standing at odds with God and His people (2 Thessalonians 3:6). The true basis of fellowship with God and those who are His “upright” is compliance to His Word (1 John 1:7-9). Christ was wounded for the transgressions which we have committed (Isaiah 53:5).

The great righteous God spoke His righteous Word to save an unrighteous people. The plumbline of righteousness will sanctify us, allowing us to build a life in compliance with His holy will (John 17:17). We must not be amateur carpenters, but allow the Master Craftsman to align us with uprightness. Guesswork can only condemn our souls and cause our building to be for naught — *“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it....”* (Psalm 127:1). Jesus is *“.... the author of salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Hebrews 5:9).

Faith Or Feeling?

Frank Chesser

ARE YOU WALKING BY **faith** or by **feeling**? How you answer this question will determine your eternal destiny. How do you know you are saved? Many people respond to this question by saying, “Because I feel it in my heart.” How tragic that one would allow something as important as salvation to be based upon mere feeling. In no other area of life does one allow feeling to be the basic criterion for determining the rightness or wrongness of a particular thing or course of action.

One does not bake a cake by “feeling.” Instead, a recipe is consulted in order that one might know the proper ingredients to use, the correct amount of each ingredient, and the proper temperature at which to bake. A contractor would never attempt to build a house by “feeling.” Rather, he consults a blueprint in order that he might know exactly how the house should be constructed. One would not think of taking a cross-country trip by “feeling.” Instead, a road map is consulted so as to know the exact route to take, when to turn right, left, etc.

Furthermore, in baking a cake, one would not argue for the use of

fifteen additional ingredients on the basis of the failure of the recipe to specify that such ingredients were not to be used. If a blueprint calls for three bedrooms, a wise contractor would obviously not act so presumptuously as to add a fourth bedroom and then attempt to justify his actions by saying, "But the blueprint doesn't say not to." A traveler desiring to reach a certain destination does not feel at liberty to go in just any direction on the basis of the road map's failure to eliminate such routes with a "Thou shalt not...."

Many people seem unable or unwilling to apply this same logic to religion. We are commanded to *"walk by faith, not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7). God's Word is the only source of faith (Romans 10:17). Thus, to walk by faith is to walk according to the teachings of the Word of God. It is not possible to engage in an act *"by faith"* if that act is not authorized by the Word of God. God's Word is a divine recipe, blueprint, or road map.

One cannot know he is saved simply because he "feels" saved. One cannot know that his worship is acceptable to God simply because he "feels" that it is. Neither is it possible to know that one is on the road to Heaven merely on the basis of feeling. God's Word, which is our blueprint or road map, must be consulted. As Moses was careful to follow the divine pattern for the construction of the physical tabernacle (Exodus 25:40), even so must we exercise diligence in following God's divine pattern for the construction of our spiritual lives.

It is imperative that we recognize the unreliable nature of feelings. Subsequent to war, women have sometimes remarried, "feeling" that their husbands were dead, only to discover months or years later that they were alive. Truly, feelings are deceptive and unreliable. What seems right from a human perspective may be wrong. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

Feelings are often produced by the acceptance and belief of testimony. For example, a man receives a message stating that a loved one has just been killed in an automobile accident. He is immediately overwhelmed with grief. A short time later, he receives another message informing him that a terrible mistake had been made: the previous message was in error, and his loved one is alive and well. Immediately his feelings undergo a dramatic transformation. He is filled with joy. One's feelings respond in direct relation to the nature of the information or testimony received. If one receives a sad message and believes it, he will be sad, regardless of whether the message is true or false. This is why feelings are so unreliable, both in everyday life and in religious matters.

Many people are in religious error because they have allowed their feelings to be their guide, and their feelings are based upon religious teaching which is not in harmony with the Word of God. One can feel just as spiritually secure in error as in truth. Prior to becoming a Christian, Paul was a devout Pharisee. He described himself as one who was *“... taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God”* (Acts 22:3). He had lived in all good conscience before God (Acts 23:1). Paul felt spiritually secure. He felt that he was right, but he was wrong. Had Paul been determined to “walk by feelings,” he would never have renounced Judaism and embraced Christianity.

Far more is involved in “walking by faith” than just believing in God and the deity of Christ. Even the devils *“believe and tremble”* (James 2:19). Jesus spoke of certain Jews who *“believed on him”* (John 6:30), yet He later described these same Jews as children of the Devil (John 8:44), because they refused to employ their faith in action by complying with His will. Among the chief rulers of the Jews, many believed on Christ, *“... but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God”* (John 12:42,43). Agrippa believed what the prophets said concerning Christ, yet he fell short of becoming a Christian (Acts 26:27,28). *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”* (James 2:24).

The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. The faith that avails is that *“.... faith which worketh by love”* (Galatians 5:6). In order to please God, one must be characterized by the *“obedience of faith”* (Romans 16:26). Who shall enter the kingdom of Heaven? Jesus answered, *“.... he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). Salvation is reserved for a select group, *“... them that obey him”* (Hebrews 5:9).

Consequently, man is saved by divine grace and blood when he responds to God’s will in obedient faith. Having heard, believed, and obeyed the will of God, man enjoys the reality of salvation by grace, and thus experiences a “great feeling.” A Christian does not appeal to his good feelings as “proof” or “evidence” of his salvation. He appeals to divine truth as is set forth in the Bible, and his compliance with that truth. *“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). However, employing one’s faith in obedience to the will of God, and thus enjoying salvation by grace, certainly affords ample reason for good feelings.

Are you walking by faith or by feeling? Remember, the untaught heart is *“....deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked....”*

(Jeremiah 17:9). Solomon affirmed, *"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool"* (Proverbs 28:26). Place your trust in God and His Word, not in the fickle nature of human feelings.

THERE IS BUT ONE TRUE GOD

Maxie B. Boren

FROM THE VERY OPENING verse in the Old Testament, the Bible attributes the existence of all things to the creative genius and power of Almighty God. *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). Notice further what the Sacred Record declares: *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth... Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast"* (Psalm 33:6,8). *"In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them"* (Exodus 20:11). *"The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens"* (Proverbs 3:19). Think of a being so great! Such knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and power that was necessarily involved in the creation of all things is awesome! It is nothing less than overwhelming to ponder! The finite minds of mere men just cannot fully comprehend the infinite wisdom and power of God. But one thing is for sure ... the true and living God should be truly exalted in the hearts of all humanity! People of every nation should stand in absolute amazement of the One who has always been, and is now, and will always be the Supreme Sovereign of the whole universe!

The Psalmist of old wrote, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard"* (Psalm 19:1-3). Yes, by observing the design and beauty of all that surrounds people the world over, there can be no doubt that there was indeed a Master Designer and Creator. Every day and every night the evidence of this truth can be seen in the natural world in which we live. There is no way it could have just happened by blind chance! The prophet Jeremiah penned these words, *"Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You"* (Jeremiah 32:17). *"Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created.... Let them praise the name of the Lord, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and the heaven"* (Psalm 148:5,13).

No wonder then, that one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, named Paul, indicted the ancient Gentile nations for their calloused hearts. He wrote, *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but.... professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever"* (Romans 1:20-24).

Sadly, those words written by inspiration so long ago are applicable to what is going on in many parts of the world today! Because many people have chosen not to believe in the one true and living God, but in gods made with hands. Please note that wherever Paul went during his first century lifetime, he rebuked idolatry of all kinds: To the people of Athens, he said,

Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'for we are also His offspring.' Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising" (Acts 17:22-29).

And again at Ephesus, and throughout the western part of Turkey, this same apostle declared, *"they are not gods which are made with hands"* (Acts 19:26).

In view of all the above, I would today implore people everywhere to turn away from any form of idolatry, to the true and living God who

created all things. Read and study the Bible, which is His revealed will to all humanity the world over for all time. Let it be your source of spiritual information; let it be your guide and counsel in life. It is God's Word! It not only tells you of God's creative power, but it tells you of His power to save your soul from sin, which is the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ! The same apostle who was quoted earlier in this article wrote "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all those who believe*" (Romans 1:16). "*Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him*" (Hebrews 5:9).

"LET THE PEACE OF GOD RULE!"

Dillard Thurman

WHILE THE LOUD AND OMINOUS sound of war and strife grates up our ears, the "Dove of Peace" floats on silent wings! Yet we must remember that it is not with a clarion call that God paints the beauty of the rainbow, or the glory of the sunset! The breathless splendor of the Aurora Borealis is not attended with the clanging of cymbals! Nor are the mighty works and powers of God heralded by pomp and circumstance as are the dramas which men advertize! God moves silently throughout the Universe without ostentation and fanfare. And as lights in the world, His saints are to perform their good deeds without sounding a trumpet to attract the attention of the world (Mt. 5:14-16).

All too often the blustery sound of braggarts only portray weakness; not strength! The steam that blows the whistle doesn't move the train; it is the empty box-car that makes the noise; the squeaking wheel needs the grease; and the braying mule is seldom found in the harness! These and many other sayings inform us that it is foolish to spend valuable time and energy "sounding off to attract attention to what we are doing!

The Attributes of God's Peace

Having the peace of God within will show to the world our character. "*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy, and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*" (Jas. 3:17-18). When you find that kind of person in the church, the Lord has a fruitful servant! Church growth is not attained by riot and confusion. We are instructed: "*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*" (Col. 3:15). If peace reigns, then spiritual growth is well assured. Paul also wrote, "*To be spiritually minded is life and peace.*" (Rom. 8:6). His summation was: "*And the peace of God, which*

passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:7).

Paul outlined paths that promoted peace and harmony for the people of God. He exhorted the Ephesians to be *“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* (Eph. 4:3). To the saints in Rome, he wrote: *“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith we may edify another.”* (Rom. 14:19). He then brought it home in writing, *“And be at peace among yourselves.”* (1 Thes. 5:13). If the church is not at peace within, it cannot have much influence on the world! If love and peace is shown among brethren, the world looks on in admiration!

Turning From the Gospel of Peace!

Luke spake of a bunch of rabble rousers of that day as *“lewd fellows of the baser sort,”* (Acts 17:5). He branded them for what they were! Yet today many people have turned away their ears from the truth, and been turned unto fables by such false teachers! It is amazing that many rational folk are led astray by religious racketeers whose egotistical claims of personal piety and power with God brand them as cheap hypocrites! Their constant panhandling tactics on radio and TV betray them; yet many ignore 2 Jno. 9-11, and become party to their devilry! Men who have prospered in business by following the principle, *“Investigate before you invest,”* have forsaken that path and blindly followed false prophets in religion! Such religious chicanery surely does not portray the peace of God!

Peace At Any Price Advocates

Attaching itself to the matter of peace is the scourge of destructive heresies opposing sound doctrine. If one “hews the line” while contending for a “Thus saith the Lord,” and “Book, chapter and verse,” he is often accused of “disturbing the peace of believers.” These “peace at any price” advocates brand anyone who contends earnestly for the faith as “a modern Ishmaelite, whose hand is against every man.” But *“We wrestle not against flesh and blood”* while engaged in defending the faith! They who plead for extending fellowship to those out of Christ, seek to become “brotherhood regulators” and thus sow discord and destroy peace! *“For they speak peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.”* (Psa. 35:20). These troublesome headline hunters make a great display of their avid pursuit of peace: but do their fruits signify this? *“They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace: when there is no peace.”* (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). Yes, friends, we are told, *“If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men.”* (Rom. 12:18). But that still

doesn't call for "peace at any price." There comes the time when you must make a choice of standing with the Lord, or courting popularity with men. Then "Peace with God" must be the primary consideration!

Which Side of an Issue is Chosen?

In the last forty or fifty years, there have been divisive issues confronting the church. During this time, a preacher who showed a charitable attitude toward one who differed in matters of opinion was marked by "keepers of orthodoxy" who sought to "drive him into the opposing camp!" The moderate, conservative, "middle of the road" position often held was said to be untenable! However, I had held the same position (and so had the church,) for twenty years! That was accepted before those "present disturbances" were known, and many saw no reason to change! I believe extreme, intolerant views on **HOW** to do things shows little regard for the Lord's church. I find He told us **WHAT** to do; but the **HOW** was left up to us!

How Can We Solve Such Problems?

Where churches are being mutilated and torn as under by internal problems, peace and harmony can be restored with one good revival meeting, and an ingathering of lost souls! When a baby is born into a family, brothers and sisters almost instantly overcome selfishness and petty strife as they vie with one another to care for the baby, and wait on the mother! And in the same way, the church becomes united when souls are born into the family of God! Members rejoice over these babes in Christ, and extend to them their love and care. Members are drawn closer together by such new additions! Brotherly love and understanding becomes easier as we work together to serve the family of God! We may not fully agree with each brother as to **HOW** he is serving; but forbearance and tolerance makes us rejoice in his accomplishments in Christ, and we aid in the work to avoid the death throes of intestine strife stemming from hatred and jealousy. Peace is restored and preserved when faith works by love! *"Wherefore, brethren, ... be diligent that ye may be found in him in peace, without spot, and blameless."* (2 Pet. 3:14).

How Can We Promote Peace?

Peace and harmony will permeate the whole body of Christ when we become engrossed in the task of saving lost souls! When saints accept the common challenge facing all, and join together to save lost men, our differences will fade away! The vision of going before God with the world unsaved, when we had the word of salvation, should unite our hearts and minds! Yet multitudes may face His judgment never

having heard the gospel because the church was embroiled in selfish, strife! Our differences can be more easily reconciled when we seriously consider the grave responsibility we share! Too, we must all face God's judgment to give an account of our stewardship of His word! Those who have known me through my writings for the past many years will not read into this statement an advocacy of compromise on principles of faith. We would not condone any breach of God's word. But if a matter rests upon human judgment as to ways and means, then why stigmatize the church of God by contending for selfish, personal views? Too often the loud, bombastic, vociferous buffoon who "railroads" through his pet church project does very little else! But all the while, true, worthy saints of God, in peace, quietness and humility, go about doing the work the loud braggart only talks about! Any member who would factionalize the body of Christ by fighting for his personal project doesn't love the Lord!

"Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all." (2 Thes. 3:16).

THE POWER OF GOD

Frances Parr

WHAT IS THE MOST powerful thing God has created? One might say the universe, while others would name a waterfall, the sun or moon, the blue whale. Consider also the workings of the human body, and love one for another. The list is endless.

Mortals cannot imagine the vastness of God's power. For thousands of years brilliant scientists have studied our universe, the earth, animal life, and the human body. Their discoveries fill volumes; however, what they have learned shows how much more is still shrouded in mystery.

Many things we know about and live with are quite beyond our mastery. The mighty ocean waves can smash our strongest constructions; illnesses strike down the most stalwart; tornadoes rip through any obstacle. But our God is able to control them all.

Man is a mere speck or a vapor which lives today and is gone tomorrow. David, in Psalm 8:4, said, *"What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?"*

Why indeed would God create the universe, make the earth a special place for man to live in, and give it to him to care for? Love. So much love that He sent His Son to die in our place when we had committed sin against Him.

While Jesus lived on earth He did many miracles to show that He

was God's Son. Even so, the majority did not believe. After seeing Him feed 4,000 people with seven loaves and a few fish, the Pharisees asked for a sign from heaven. Mark 8:12 says that Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, *"Why does this generation seek a sign? no sign will be given to this generation."*

They had already had many signs if they would but acknowledge them. David wrote in Psalm 19:1, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."* Anyone desiring proof of God's power needs only to observe His creation.

God's power is evident in great and mighty things. Consider also the small things. Jesus used the tiny mustard seed as the object of two parables. He said, *".... when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches"* (Matthew 13:32). Observe God's power in a seed which looks dry and dead, yet when given water and nutrients from the soil, it becomes a living plant. At the moment of creation God put within each plant and animal its own seed. *"Be fruitful and multiply,"* He told them (Genesis 1). Only God could devise such an ingenious plan.

God composed the human body with billions of microscopic cells. Different combinations of these cells control breathing, heartbeats, and digestion without our giving it a thought. God's power in minute things can easily be seen in the body.

God, in His omnipotence, desires but one thing from man—his love in return. Throughout the Old Testament, many times God said, *"I will be your God and you will be my people."* Consider that God made the entire creation to that end. The church is the answer to God's desire for someone to love Him.

Possibly the thing which requires God's greatest outpouring of power is the forgiveness of our sins. While God cannot even look at sin, He loved us enough to send His Son to bear the burden of all our transgressions. Paul said in Romans 1:16, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes...."*

Quoting Paul again in Ephesians 3:20 and 21, *"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."*

You and I can have God's power to work within ourselves. Accepting Jesus as His Son and putting our egotistical self aside, we open the way for that power to enter in. We will gain rewards far beyond our expectations. In Luke 6:38 we are promised that our giving will be returned *"good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over...."*

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). God caused John to write a personal note to each of us. He said, *"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son"* (Revelation 21:7).

The same powerful God who created the heavens and the earth wants me for His child, if I will only allow Him to be my God.

JESUS CHRIST IS DEITY

E. Claude Gardner

WHO IS JESUS OF NAZARETH? During His earthly ministry the evaluations of Him reported to Him by His disciples were not uncomplimentary, but they were inaccurate. *"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias: and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets"* (Matthew 16:14). In modern times we hear Him called an historical myth; a great teacher; a good man; a wonderful ideal; a prophet, but not **the** Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-18); a founder of a prominent religion (Christianity) that is God-approved like many others; and that He was only a human being who had a natural birth rather than a supernatural virgin birth.

The only true and accurate answer was given by the apostle Peter who confessed, *".... Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16). Jesus blessed him for this good confession and said this truth did not come from man as human wisdom, but rather from *"my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 16:17).

How has God the Father given evidence that Christ, the Son, is divine? Since we believe that God exists and that He has given a divine revelation of His will in the Bible, we then turn to the Scriptures for proof.

The Bible affirmed and Jesus claimed that He was deity. *"I and my Father are one"* (John 10:30). When He was asked by the high priest, *"'art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?'" Jesus said, 'I am'"* (Mark 14:61,62).

Christ established His deity by fulfilling **all** of the numerous Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah. After His resurrection Luke records, *"And He said unto them, 'These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me'"* (Luke 24:44).

Christ brought a way of life that is unmatched in the annals of history.

The context, as well as His manner of teaching, transcend what a mere human can convey. The explanation — *“never man spake like this man”* (John 7:46). The powerful Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is still a challenge today. Men have not improved on its lofty principles. After He finished, Matthew records the reaction of the hearers, *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes”* (Matthew 7:28,29).

Christ demonstrated His being Lord by His perfect life. He never made any mistake in thought, word, or deed. Peter wrote, *“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth”* (1 Peter 2:22). His enemies tried to entrap and entangle Him, but always they failed because He was perfect. When Pilate examined Him he stated, *“I find no fault in this man”* (Luke 23:4). We can afford to try to follow in His footsteps to the best of our ability because He is our perfect example.

Christ performed miracles, demonstrating His power over both the seen and unseen world. He healed the blind and lame, raised the dead, calmed the sea, fed the multitudes, cast out demons, and many other wonders. When He performed such mighty works those present did not and could not deny that a miracle had been done, even though they attributed His power to the devil (Matthew 12:22-27). The enemies of Jesus acknowledged that He worked genuine miracles, but still they rejected Him. *“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, ‘What do we? for this man doeth many miracles’”* (John 11:47). The fundamental reason Jesus performed miracles was to prove that He is divine and that He was what He claimed to be — the Son of God. The apostle John made this purpose clear when he wrote, *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name”* (John 20:30,31).

Christ died and was raised bodily on the third day after His crucifixion. His tomb was empty as His enemies knew, when Peter fifty days later preached on Pentecost Day in Jerusalem that Jesus had been raised (Acts 2:22-24,31,32), the enemies did not oppose his claim, nor did they produce the body of Jesus. Indeed He had risen and was seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33-36). His resurrection is positive proof of His divinity, as the apostle Paul wrote, *“And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4).

At the foot of the cross a Roman guard observed the final events and was led to exclaim, *“Truly this was the Son of God”* (Matthew 27:54).

The perfect life and teaching, the fulfilled prophecies, the miracles, climaxed by the resurrection convince us to confess and claim Jesus as Christ and Lord. Upon this expression of great faith in Him we are buried with Him in baptism for the remission of our sins. *"Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'"* (Acts 2:38), Thereafter we must strive daily *"to be conformed to the image of His Son"* (Romans 8:29).

Did The Witch Of En-dor Make Samuel Appear?

Max Patterson

IN 1 SAMUEL 28 THERE is a story concerning Saul and the witch of En-dor. Saul is in the depths of despair. He seeks help from a source which he formerly would have regarded with great contempt — the witch of En-dor. He had no doubt put to death others who practiced witchcraft and similar deceptive matters. But now, in despair, he remembers Samuel, whose wisdom he had disregarded in life, but whom he hopes to reach for advice through the witch.

The woman (the witch) does her usual incantations (ones common in such seances). What happens next is a real surprise. Samuel appears. The appearance of Samuel is real. But this was not accomplished by the witch's treachery. Actually she was wholly unprepared for what occurred. She had not expected Samuel to actually appear, and she was surprised. It seems Saul had more faith in the witch than the witch did.

The appearance of Samuel was neither by the power of the woman nor by the agency of the devil. It was not an illusion. The design of what happened is to rebuke both the witch and Saul. What happened is clearly a miracle. The proof of the genuineness of the miracle is to be seen in Samuel's message delivered to Saul: Verse 19, *".... God will deliver Israel also with you (Saul) into the hand of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. ..."*

Samuel predicted that the Philistines would triumph in battle over Israel, and that Saul and his sons would die on the morrow following this exchange. These details could not have been known by the woman, Satan, or any of his agents. So, they must have been delivered by inspiration.

Therefore, Samuel did appear before King Saul, not by witchery, but

by divine interposition. The purpose of what happened was to rebuke both the woman and Saul. So, this story lends no credence to sorcery. What happened was not a trick, nor was it the witch actually calling up Samuel by her supposed powers.

TRUE WORSHIP

Charles Curtis

"Oh, come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker" (Psalm 95:6). The primary design for worship is to glorify God. It is an act of reverence paid to our Creator. To worship God acceptably is not always easy. Let me suggest that true worship does several things.

Worship deepens our gratitude to God and makes us sensitive to our needs and weaknesses. There is a denominational church in our city where chimes are played every Sunday morning in an effort to call its members to worship. As Christians we hear a higher calling to worship. When Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up, he said, *"Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"* (Isaiah 6:5).

Our affections are elevated when we worship God in spirit and truth. We have a deeper love for God, the lost, our brethren, and the truth that makes us free. As we worship we remember all that God has done for us. As we partake of the Lord's Supper we are reminded of the past, present, and the future. We are reminded of the cross and His death. We are also reminded of the power of His blood and our own continual need for cleansing.

Worship is a relief from the cares of everyday living. We are strengthened and refreshed after having worshiped. Worship reassures us that the Bible is true when it says, *"Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us"* (Romans 8:37). *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"* (Romans 8:1).

Worship affords us the opportunity to deepen our understanding of God. Our faith is strengthened by the faithful preaching of the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Our hurts are made glad when we study God's Word with an open and respectful heart. *"And they said one to another, did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scripture?"* (Luke 24:32).

Worship draws us into the presence of God. Jesus said, *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). In worship we are drawn closer to God. In worship there is the reaffirmation of our faith in the promises of God. Who can sing *“Standing on the Promises”* or *“Heaven Holds All to Me”* without being closer to God?

SALVATION IN CHRIST IS SALVATION IN HIS CHURCH

Basil Overton

“THEREFORE, I ENDURE ALL things for the elect’s sake that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Timothy 2:10). Salvation is in Christ Jesus. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). Salvation from sin can be had nowhere except in Christ Jesus.

To be in Christ is the same as being in the church of Christ. *“To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: And let the peace of God rule in your hearts to which ye are called in one body”* (Colossians 1:2; 3:15). Those at Colosse who were in Christ were in one body. But that one body is the church. *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence”* (Colossians 1:18).

Christ is the Savior of all men in the sense that all men who *want* to be saved *can* be saved. Only those *will* be saved by Christ who do what He tells them in the New Testament to do to be saved. *“Though he were a Son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; being then made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him”* (Hebrews 5:8,9).

When a person obeys Christ, he believes the Gospel; he *believes* that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 3:23). He *repents* of his sins (Acts 17:30). He is *baptized* into Christ (Romans 6:3). When one thus gets into Christ, he is saved *by Christ*, for salvation is *in Christ*. That is why baptism is necessary; baptism puts one *into Christ* (Galatians 3:27). That is why Peter said: *“...Repent and be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins....”* (Acts 2:38).
