



# Magazine

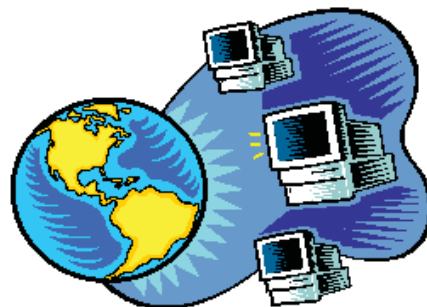
Vol. XLII No. 10  
May 21, 1998

## Virtual Reality

Shawn Bain

Today's toys are so technologically advanced with the enhancement of graphics, the game you play seems to come alive. Some games involve a simulation with a head gear placed over the eyes and a set of controls in the hands of the player. The game(s) produces images and situations that put the player in the middle of the action. "Virtual Reality" is born.

"Virtual Reality" entertains us. It teases the mind with possibilities. The possibilities cause the one who plays the game to wonder if what he sees with his eyes and controls with his hands could not truly be realized. A dream come true. Others who play know the game presents the idea of a fantasy world, and conditions that surround the earth or laws of the land would not allow for such to ever happen. Although it may never happen, they enjoy being entertained by it nonetheless. Several people enjoy science fiction. *Star Wars* enjoyed being the number one box office hit for years. Millions of people enjoyed its adventure, characters, and special effects. The simulation witnessed in *Star Wars* was tolerated, but the real thing has not been experienced.



People today are playing the game of Virtual Reality with regard to sexual scenes that tease the mind with possibilities. There are pictures displayed on TV and movie screens that depict characters engaging in sexual activity. These characters may be boyfriend and girlfriend or a married couple, but that does not matter. This is not a game, but the situation presented will cause the one who watches to wonder if what he sees with his eyes could become something he could play out in real life with his girlfriend or her boyfriend. Although many watch such activities thinking, "This doesn't affect me," they enjoy being entertained by it nonetheless.

Many people have read and studied and preached on the sexual abuse of David and Bathsheba. Would you want to attend a *live* production of the life of David which included such a dramatic and passionate scene depicted in 2 Samuel 11:2-5? What about a live play that visualized for us the lives of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden before and after their sin? You would probably never think of paying money to watch live

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# Editorial

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**Manuscripts** should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana 46122-9075. He is available at 1-317-745-4708.

**All business matters** should be addressed to O.C. Birdwell, Jr. who serves as Executive Vice-President for the Guardian of Truth Foundation. He is available by phone at 1-800-633-3216 or by mail at P.O. Box 858, Athens, AL 35611.

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# Personal Responsibility

Mike Willis

In Ezekiel's day, shortly before the Babylonian Captivity in 587 B.C., the Jews explained their political difficulties by this proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezek. 18:2). The adage blamed their sufferings on others, namely their fathers. To refute this concept, Ezekiel described the following situations:

1. *The case of a righteous man (Ezek. 18:5-9).* Ezekiel described a righteous man who conscientiously obeyed the Lord's law. This man shall not suffer death; rather, "he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 18:9).

2. *The wicked son of a righteous man (Ezek. 18:10-13).* Ezekiel then described the wicked son of this righteous man who became a robber, shedder of blood, and such like things. Despite the fact that his father was a righteous man, "he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him" (Ezek. 18:13).

3. *The righteous son of a wicked man (Ezek. 18:14-18).* The prophet then described the righteous son of this wicked man who, seeing his father's wickedness, turned away from it in repentance toward God. The prophet said, "When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live" (Ezek. 18:19).

4. *The righteous man who turns to commit wickedness (Ezek. 18:24).* When the righteous man forsakes his obedience to turn aside to sin, "all this righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."

The principle of moral responsibility by which God judges the world is this: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezek 18:20).

## Personal Responsibility For Sin

Many of our social science professionals try to excuse wicked conduct. When two young men brutally slay their parents, the lawyers' defense is what they went through in their youth. When a young mother drives

See "Personal" p. 312

# Editorial Left-overs

Connie W. Adams

## Help Needed in Bergen, Norway

After 21 years of work in Norway, Tom and Shirley Bunting will be coming back to the States at the end of this year. They have worked long, hard, and faithfully. While progress has been slow, progress has been made. Shirley's health has not been good the last few years. Tom still plans to return each year for brief periods of work. He is appealing for someone to replace him in the work. If you are mature in the faith and are ready for a great challenge, please write to:

Thomas Bunting  
Adolf Bergvei 52-D  
5030 Landaus  
Norway

Terrell Bunting along with his wife, Karen, and their three children plan to continue in the work in Bergen where they have already spent several years. They have adapted to the language and culture well. Terrell has worked tirelessly in writing and printing tracts, Bible correspondence courses (they use several), and other materials for use in the work. For the last few months they have been in the States for a much needed break while Terrell has preached by appointments, in meetings, and has made numerous reports on the work in Norway. One of the elders at Cahaba Heights in Birmingham, Alabama has provided a home for them during this time. They are anxious to get back to their home and work in Norway in the summer. Terrell has learned recently that he is losing \$1800 a month support. That is really bad news. The cost of living is very high in Norway (it is one of the most expensive countries in which we have traveled) and it is absolutely necessary for that to be replaced. With Tom and Shirley coming home, it is all the more urgent that Terrell and Karen be provided what they need to carry on the work. They plan to spend their lives there in the Lord's work. They have already made a great difference.

The last time we were there I came away feeling better about the work than at any time since it all began in 1957. How about helping to spread the word around and support a good man in a needy place. Who else do you know that brethren could support in the work there with years of experience already in the field, who is fluent in the language and at ease in the culture? If you can help, or know of those who can help, please write or call:

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Terrell Bunting  
c/o Clark Maxson  
3433 Country Brook Lane  
Birmingham, AL 35243  
(205) 967-4588

### **Elsie Shull — A Modern Dorcas**

Elsie Shull passed away one month short of her 90th birthday. She was Bobby's mother, my mother-in-law. She left us on January 17 while we were somewhere over west Africa trying to get back from work in South Africa. Her life was long and faithfully lived in service to the Lord and many other people. Since her death many have told us of kind deeds she did for them, even to the last week of her life. She was at Bible study on Wednesday night before her death on Saturday night. She had planned to visit folks in a nursing home on Thursday and had to be dissuaded because she was not feeling well. She continually baked and cooked for the sick and needy. She wrote countless notes to encourage the sick, the discouraged, and the weak. She taught classes for children for many years. She took young couples out to eat just to encourage them. Visiting the sick and those in nursing homes was a regular practice.

At the funeral service at which her son Jerry spoke, along with Harold Byers and Greg Littmer, I spoke about her as a friend to preachers. In looking for some phone numbers for people we needed to call, I looked through her little alphabetized address book and was struck by how many preachers she had listed. There were 36 in five countries. She sent help time and again to worthy men and sometimes to their widows who were left in need. The church at Expressway misses her. So do a host of friends and family members. Bobby and I miss her terribly. She is at rest from her labors and her works follow her.

### **A Real Preacher**

If children can't keep you humble, nobody can. Since last August, when Phillip Mullins moved to California, the church at Manslick Road has been without a full-time

preacher until March 1 when Frank and Sandy Himmel came to work with us. Between August and March, Richard Peterson and I did the preaching. I mainly filled in while home between meetings. In one of the children's classes a little boy wrote a note to Frank and Sandy to welcome them to Manslick Road. He said, "Richard and Connie did OK, but we are ready for a real preacher." We are glad to have that "real preacher" among us. In the meantime, Richard and I will just forge ahead and do the best we can.

### **A Letter from Taiwan**

A Filipino sister who is working in Taiwan wrote me asking for back issues of *Truth Magazine*. She has tried in vain to find a faithful congregation where she lives. Her father in the Philippines had sent her some back issues of *Searching the Scriptures* and *Guardian of Truth*. Someone had sent him a gift subscription to these but that had stopped in 1991. She had been reading and rereading these old issues and looking up Scripture references to help her in her study. Those of us who write never know into whose hands our work will fall and the amount of good it may do. It also is sobering to think that what we write may be used years later by a lonely Christian far from home and away from brethren, as a means of spiritual help. I sent her some more recent back issues of the paper.

### **A Growing Set of Commentaries**

There are now seven volumes completed in the New Testament Commentaries published by Guardian of Truth Foundation. *The Gospel of John* by Dan King is now at the printer and *The Book of Romans* by Clinton Hamilton is now in the second reading before going to the printer. They are all in matching binding and not only make a handsome set, but are substantive works which will long endure as useful tools for the Bible student. Are you adding these to your library as they become available? Call toll free 1-800-428-0121 to order your copy.

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# Repent and Cluck Like a Chicken

Tom Hamilton

Had the Greek word *baptisma* — “baptisms” never been associated with a disputed religious practice, there never would have been any question concerning its meaning and proper English translation. However, by the time the first English translations of the Bible were made in the sixteenth century, ecclesiastical practice had already established “baptism” as a mystical, sacred religious sacrament, administered by pouring, sprinkling, or immersion. Obviously, no Bible could be allowed to translate *baptisma* as “immersion.” Such would undermine the doctrine of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and centuries of tradition. In fact, the Catholic Church and Church of England (among others) required that certain “ecclesiastical terms” be retained (such as “baptism” and “church”) in order to conform to church doctrine. In other words, church doctrine was to determine what the Bible taught, not vice-versa.

In this article (and others to follow), which is dedicated to the special theme of baptism, we demonstrate that there are four clear ways by which anybody can see for themselves what this family of words really means. These proofs are to be seen in how the Greeks themselves used the word (1) in classical Greek, (2) in the Septuagint (i.e., the Greek Old Testament), (3) in contemporary Greek literature, and (4) the Greek New Testament itself. Most of these writings are unrelated to “Christian baptism” and therefore offer objective evidence as to the true meaning of the term.

In every case and without exception, the meaning of *baptisma* is a “dipping,” “plunging under,” “immersion,” “submersion,” “soaking,” etc. Never is any other action, such as sprinkling or pouring, included in the definition of the word. Of course, sometimes the word is used figuratively, that is, not of physical immersion in some physical substance. But even then, the concept is that of immersion, such as “immersed in grief,” “overwhelmed with anxiety,” or “in over your head.”

**We are often told that sprinkling, pouring, and immersing are just different, equally acceptable ways of baptizing.**

It should be very clear that *baptisma* means “immersion” and should be translated as such — indeed it would have been, had prevailing doctrinal practices not been invented by men. If one would substitute “immersion” (the proper translation) for “baptism,” he would see how foolish denominational practice is — “Sprinkling is just one way of immersing!” By definition, it is a contradiction!

Nowhere in the New Testament do we find anything except immersion practiced. The New Testament nowhere teaches sprinkling, pouring, or anything else as a suitable or alternate mode of “baptism.” But we are often told that sprinkling, pouring, and immersing are just different, equally acceptable ways of baptizing. The question is — how do we know sprinkling and pouring are acceptable? It would have to be upon some other basis besides what the word means (because no one ever defined or used the word *baptisma* in this way) or what the Bible teaches (because it nowhere mentions sprinkling or pouring), so how do I know?

What if I started teaching people that in order for them to be saved, they could just hop on one foot and cluck like a chicken? And if someone objects that baptism has to do with water, we’ll just make that a wet chicken. I could tell folks that it’s just another, perfectly acceptable means of “baptizing.” If not, why not? Would you say that that’s not what the word means? or that no one ever used the word in that way? or that the Bible teaches no such thing?

Do these objections sound familiar? Let’s stick to what the word simply means and to what the Word simply says: “Repent and be immersed . . . for the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38).

---

*From In Christ, Muncie, Indiana, February 1998*



# The Birth of Christ: History or Myth

Abraham Smith

“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes will He really find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Do you have problems accepting the biblical account of the birth of Jesus? Are you persuaded that relevant facts or information would lead to doubt of the biblical account? If so, I say as the Apostle Paul said, “Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently” (Acts 26:3).

In thinking about whether information is factual or evidence relevant, we should ask, does anyone deny, oppose, or reject the validity of such evidence or information and upon what basis? We should also conclude that it would be irrational to doubt evidence when there isn't a trace of objective opposition to it. Upon such evidence, then we are able to draw conclusions from this undisputed evidence.

The question for us in considering the Bible's account of the birth of Christ is, “Is there such undisputed evidence?” To answer this, we must determine if Luke (writer of biblical books Luke and Acts) is a credible source. Luke makes reference to 32 countries, 54 cities, and nine islands without any mistakes. Without encyclopedias, he has given accurately titles of officials that often changed over time and has recorded event after event that has been confirmed by inscriptional data or other findings. Even where he was thought to have made mistakes (reference to Lysanias, Luke 3:1, and Quirinius as governor of Syria, Luke 2:1), he has been proven accurate by forthcoming discoveries. (See F.F. Bruce *New Testament Documents* for more information.)

It has been said that Sir William Ramsay is regarded as one of the greatest archaeologists ever to have lived. Concerning Luke he says, “Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy . . . this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians. Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness.” Can any deny these facts?

Having considered Luke's trustworthiness and confir-

mation, we should ask, “How much confirmation does a writer have to have before he is considered a historian?” If a writer such as Luke is judged to be a historian, then would not his writing of an event be historical evidence that this event did occur as recorded? If we say that the writings of such a person are not historical, then why do we accept other writings (*History of Herodotus 488-428 BC*) as historical when they don't have as much confirmation? If we consider Herodotus to be a historian but not Luke, the only conclusion we can make of this is that we have a bias against one. Then it would not be our scholarship that causes us to arrive at this non-historical conclusion, but our prejudice against any writings that attribute anything to the supernatural.

Some “scholars” have even suggested that Luke was wrong about the “worldwide” census. Did the census take place or not? “The first three Gospels were written at a time when many were alive who could remember the things that Jesus said and did” (F.F. Bruce, *New Testament Documents* 13). And hardly no critic, atheist, agnostic, or otherwise would deny that Luke did write shortly after the events he describes. Luke states his purpose for writing the book of Luke, “that you may know the certainty of those things . . .” If this census did not happen, Luke (so accurate at all other points), writing in hope that people would believe that Jesus is the Christ, tries to accomplish his objective by reporting an event that all the world would know did not take place. What could make a person believe that Luke was guilty of such a blunder?

A census was taken every fourteen years and in A.D. 104 a census as Luke described took place which shows these censuses were not uncommon (Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* 284-287). Who can deny these facts? During Augustus' reign, “The loss of citizenship was the punishment of the man who failed to have his name enrolled” (Num De nis Fustel De Coulonges, *The Ancient City* 162). We know a census did take place around 8 B.C. and there have been other censuses taking several years to complete. So it would be easy to see how the census of 8

B.C. may be the census that Luke described (*When Critics Ask* 383-385).

It is also noteworthy that the birth of Christ is less significant in lower age groups according to a national survey by Barna Research Group Ltd. Obviously people today believe less in the birth of Christ because they believe less in the documents that reveal that birth.

Could the reason for this be that many people especially our young are being exposed to only one negative view of Christ's birth? Could Josh McDowell be right when he says that much of the research and many of the writings quoted in his book (*Evidence that Demands a Verdict*) are not available at most secular universities? Therefore students and faculty are often limited in their examination of the subjects covered in the classroom and in his book according to him.

Wouldn't it be a shame if the real reason for this unavailability is simply that on philosophical grounds, credible alternative positions were excluded? Would this be education or indoctrination?

A student wrote to Billy Graham, "I have been taking a course in religion at college. My professor claims that the Bible is full of contradictions and factual errors, and that it is a book like any other human book. If this is so, why should I rely on it for a knowledge of spiritual truth?" She and others should know that "following the modern Historical approach I would never come to believe in the resurrection of Jesus as Savior and Lord" (Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict 2*) and I might add to that no acceptance of the birth of Christ by such a philosophical approach. The reason is that the average "modern" historian rules out any reference to the supernatural as being unhistorical, or they would say a "myth." They have already determined the limits of their results beforehand!

The college professor said that "the Bible is full of contradictions and factual errors." Is the Bible "full" of such? "In addition to illuminating the Bible, Archaeology has confirmed countless passages which have been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known facts" (Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*). If a passage of Scripture is contradictory to a "known fact," they both can't be truth. Acceptance of one is the denial of the other. If a passage is confirmed as true by archaeological discoveries, then the contradictory "known fact" could not really be a fact. Just how many times do you suppose these critics used these erroneous "known facts" to destroy the faith of some in the Scriptures in the name of education? How many other "known facts" contradictory to various passages are just waiting to be removed into a nonfactual category by future discoveries? But until this happens, these little "known facts" will be used to destroy the faith of our

young. And these critics are just as sure of these "known facts" as they were the others before these "facts" were disproven by evidence.

Can any deny what Joseph Free said? If not, then the past is full of illustrations of discoveries establishing Scripture and disproving interpretations called "known facts" by some. Do you ever wonder what do these critics use to come up with these "known facts"? Perhaps it was their philosophy that the Bible evolved from men and did not come from God! If this philosophy brought us errors in the past, shall we continue to trust it today to guide us? God has given us a guide, "your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

The Bible is never wrong! It is God's word. If any evidence seems to conflict with Scriptures, we either have a false interpretation of the evidence or a false interpretation of the Scriptures. God made the world and gave us the Bible through error-free guided men. How can they disagree? So a man may rationally believe that Jesus on earth healed, walked on water, and arose from the dead to ascend to the right hand of the Father and will one day return. But before he did any of that, he was born of a virgin, in a manger, during a census just like the Bible says.

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# I Remember

Oscar Ellison

Some years have now passed since I obtained a copy of the article written by brother Ed Harrell titled, “The Emergence of the Church of Christ Denomination.” I was deeply moved by what I was reading, and when I came to the end of his study and the conclusion he reached, I was astounded.

I had for years sought a solution to stop the steady movement among brethren that was leading us farther and farther away from the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ. I began to preach the gospel in the midst of the Great Depression, about 1930. I had just graduated from college with a major in Latin. In 1934, I married Pauline Ross, my wife of 64 years, and a year later we moved to Marietta, Oklahoma where I began to be supported by the small congregation there.

As brother C.R. Nichol told me, I was green. But he said, “Stay green, because green things grow.” I have never forgotten his timely counsel and at 85 still recognize that it is true. I sat at his feet and listened to his great wisdom. Throughout my years as a full-time preacher at various congregations, he was the visiting preacher for at least one meeting.

I could spend a lot of time remembering, but one thing sticks in my heart. We traveled by train whenever possible in those years. I always took him to the depot, and he never told me goodbye without crying. I puzzled over that for many years. Why would he cry? Finally, I reached the age he was when we worked together, and I knew. He did not know that he would ever see me again on this Earth. “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.”

But I tell you this for just one reason. C.R. Nichol, R.L. Whiteside, Joe Blue, J.D. Tant, and many others were in that time bringing their work to an end here upon the Earth. They, like Paul, had fought the good fight. I was just learning, and to me it was a gift far greater than I then knew. Let me tell you about it.

In those days, there was not a meeting house of the brethren in every town. Even in the larger population centers, there was likely to be only one or two meeting houses. Many of them knew nothing of a local preacher. And, if a preacher lived there, he did not do all the preaching he did in the congregation there. They supported him but did not require his constant presence. He was truly an evangelist.

In those days, we had what were called preachers’ meetings. One congregation invited the preachers in the area to spend a good part of a week as their guests and study with them. Planned subjects were discussed by those present. They ate together and slept in the homes of brethren who lived there. Much good was accomplished in the matter of learning more about the truth. And there was much time for visiting and relating to each other their preaching experiences.

These meetings I loved, when I could sit and listen to these old soldiers of the cross tell of their sometimes thrilling experiences. One thing always stood out, to which all agreed: They never left home without money enough to buy a ticket home. But they went in spite of that fact.

I am sure they had read and absorbed the experiences of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. In this manner, one person, even one family, could become the means for the beginning of a strong and faithful church. Many never saw a gospel preacher, except perhaps once a year at meeting time.

Many of us who were younger sought to follow their example. If preachers of today wish to know why they have it so good, I would direct them to this bit of history. Brother R. Brannan of Marietta, Oklahoma was kind enough to pay my expenses to Freed-Hardeman College for a two-week study period. We were all young and with little experience. I’ll not forget his opening remarks to us.

He said, “Boys, when you go out to look for a place to work, don’t look for a place where you can sit down in a tub of butter. Look for an opportunity to save souls.” I



went home with that ringing in my ears. As a result, I spent my last years as a minister preaching the gospel mostly to brethren, and at home with a strong congregation.

Others may not feel that way, but I had a different upbringing. I wanted to be an evangelist in the true sense, taking the gospel to the lost. So, the last years of my active work were spent as an elder of a small congregation, trying to ground them in the faith once delivered to the saints.

Now I am saying to you, "I remember." After open heart surgery and a stroke that has left me mostly a cripple, I await my Lord's will.

I have told you my own story, not because it is anything remarkable. I am sure there are many who have and are now doing a great deal more. But, as some would express it, "I wanted you to know where I come from."

All this prepares me for commenting on brother Ed's wise words that the only remedy is just to start over with a "thus saith the Lord" for everything. I have spent much time studying the history of the periods we call the reformation and the restoration, the latter of which took place here in America, and the other in Europe and the British Isles.

I think it is clear that: (1) Reformation never gets us back to the original position. It may improve, but it never gets us where we must be; (2) Restoration is the only way we can return to true position — book, chapter, and verse. This takes us just where we want to be. What has the Lord said about our faith and practice? Having learned this, let us be content.

I feel sure this is what was intended in the article. But how to accomplish this is the task before us.

Are we, having learned this, willing to undertake it? Wisdom that is from above, with Paul's instruction to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:13), is our answer: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

But, you are ready to ask, "Is it possible in our time to do what they did in the days of David Lipscomb and of C.R. Nichol?"

All this takes a great deal of commitment, courage and above all, trust in the Lord. And, brother preacher, I am not suggesting that you do it. I am just saying this: "It can be done in our time."

We are now faced with a world filled with every kind of evil man can devise. Riches and pleasure seem to be the only goals of life. The home, the basis of all stable society, is virtually destroyed. Paul's description of what existed in the world in his day is being repeated in ours. And, to complicate it beyond measure, we are faced with those in the church who have joined the cavalcade.

How much difference do you see in the daily lifestyle of some in the church and those in the world? The marriage commitment is despised, and all that it represents is disregarded. Reform the church. You try it.

But I have said enough. However, I can still remember.

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace." This I earnestly pray.

---

2744 Cedarwood Court S.E., Albany, Oregon 97321

(Brother Ellison is an 85-year old veteran preacher whose work has been significant, faithful, and true. He would enjoy hearing from brethren he has known and with whom he has worked. Connie W. Adams)

## Backgrounds of Early Christianity

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# Psychics

Steve Wallace

It is amazing the publicity presently being given to psychics in our society. One commercial asks, "Have you called those other psychic lines only to be left with an empty feeling? Well, you deserve better. Call the 'Psychic Readers Network' and speak to a psychic who really cares." Another one asks, "Why are so many people calling Walter Mercado's psychic hotline?" Then, after some testimonials from people who say they have financially profited from the insights offered by the advertized psychic, it says, "Need help making money? Join the 'circle of vision' by dialing the number on your screen."

What then is a psychic, and what kind of activity do they engage in?

*Webster* defines the word psychic: "1. A person who is supposedly sensitive to forces beyond the physical world. 2. A spiritual medium" (*New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* 1954). Concerning the works they claim to perform, the above cited commercials made claims that their psychics could foretell the future and interpret dreams. Another asserted ability of psychics is seen in the recent news stories about the first lady's alleged contact with Eleanor Roosevelt. In downplaying the incident, a White House staffer said, "To describe it as a consultation with psychics is to try to put it in the wrong frame" (*Stars and Stripes*, June 24, 1996). Hence, we see that our society views contacting the dead as a work of a psychic.

The question that concerns God's people is, "What does the Bible say about consulting psychics?" Let us now turn our attention to it.

## The Old Testament: Deuteronomy 18:10-11

In the above text God's Old Testament people are warned about various secret arts and practices. Please note the

meaning of each word from this text below:

A. Divination: *Brown-Driver-Briggs* (*BDB*, hereafter) simply has "divination" (890); *Webster* defines the word: "the act of divining; the act or practice of trying to foretell future events or the unknown by means of the occult" (*Ibid.*, 538)

B. Observer of times: "practice soothsaying . . . but original meaning dubious" (*BDB*, 778); possibly "reading and interpretation of cloud patterns" (*Theological Word-book of the Old Testament [T.W.O.T.]* II:685). The meaning of this word is uncertain.

C. Enchanter: "practice divination, divine, observe signs" (*BDB*, 638).

D. Witch: "practice sorcery" (*BDB*, 506); "practice magic" (*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* VII:361).

E. Charmer: "v. tie magic knots, charm. . . n. spell" (*BDB* 287-288).

F. Consulter with familiar spirits: "consult" is used of inquiring of the Lord (1 Sam. 23:2; 30:8); *BDB* defines it, "necromancer" (15).

G. Wizard: from "know;" "is also used of one's relation to the divine, whether acquaintance with other gods . . . or with Jehovah. . . 'to know' . . . is esoteric knowledge not available to the ordinary person." (*Hebrew word* for 'wizard,' sw] always occurs parallel to [witch]. It may be a description of a [witch] or it may be the masculine counterpart," *T.W.O.T.* I:366-367).

H. Necromancer, two words: "to seek, consult, inquire of" (*BDB*, 205); E.g., "enquire of God" (1 Sam. 9:9; 1 Kgs.



22:8); “to die” (*BDB*, 559). Hence, “consult the dead.”

As one can see, these words are very similar in meaning and we should expect the works of those involved in the practice such things to be similar. That this is so can be seen from 1 Samuel 28:6-11 where Saul consulted the witch at Endor: The woman is said to have a “familiar spirit” (v. 7); Saul asks her to “divine” for him (v. 8), and “bring up Samuel” (v. 8) (necromancy); the woman speaks of herself in connection with “wizards” (v. 9). When we compare the above definitions with the claimed activities of psychics we can see that their work would have caused them to be condemned under the Old Testament.

### The New Testament

#### 1. People involved in “psychic-like” activities.

a. *The wise men (Matt. 2:1-2)*. The word *magus* rendered “wise men” is defined, “a wise man and priest, who was expert in astrology, interpretation of dreams and various other secret arts” (*Arndt and Gingrich* 484).

b. *Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-11)*. The meaning of sorcery is, “magic, magic arts” (*Ibid.*, 484).

c. *Those who used “magical arts” (Acts 19:13-20)*. Defined as “of things belonging to magic” (*Ibid.*, 646).

All these people confessed the superiority of Christ.

#### 2. Warnings.

a. *Gal. 5:19-21, “sorcery.”* This word is from the Greek word *pharmakeia*. It is defined, “sorcery, magic, magic arts” (*Ibid.*, 854). William Barclay says that the word took on “the meaning of sorcery and witchcraft. It is, for instance, repeatedly used of the Egyptian sorcerers and charmers who competed with Moses when Pharaoh would not let Israel go (Exod. 7.11, 8.18; Wisd. 7.12; 18.13)” (*Flesh and Spirit* 36).

b. *Rev. 21:8, “sorcerer.”* This word means “mixer of poisons, magician.” (*Arndt and Gingrich* 854).

c. *2 John 9*. One who looks to a psychic for information is sinning because they are looking to a source other than God for guidance. In the Old Testament, God said his people were to “hearken” to him and not to the sources listed under our first point (Deut. 18:14-15).

The warnings in these verses should cause everyone to see the sinfulness of psychics and their work.

### Conclusion

Deuteronomy 18 shows that such activities as psychics are involved in are the works of godless people (vv. 9, 12,

14). This is a comment on psychics and those in our society today who consult them. They are godless and their works are the works of darkness. Let us all join in pointing people to the Bible as the only source of information on spiritual things.

*PSC. 2, Box 7257, APO AE 09012*

## The Drug and Alcohol Factor

Larry Ray Hafley

“Drug and alcohol abuse and addiction played a part in the crimes committed by 80 per-cent of the 1.7 million men and women now behind bars in the United States, a major national study concluded” (*Houston Chronicle*, January 10, 1998, 9A).

Can you imagine the furor that would have been created if “a major national study” had decided that cigarette smoking “played a part in the crimes committed by 80 percent of” our present inmate population? What if it were known that better than 50 percent of all automobile fatalities, rapes, and suicides involved the use of tobacco? What kind of protest would be waged against the tobacco industry if such facts were shown?

Further, what if it could be proven that economic loss to the country (caused by illness, injuries, health care, lost work time, destruction of property, etc.) was far greater than taxes paid on tobacco products and their producers? Can anyone doubt that cries of outrage would be expressed?

However, since these facts are only true of drug and alcohol abuse, everyone can relax and drink up ( just don’t light up!). This Bud’s for you!

*4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521*



# Chorazin

Mike Willis

## The “Seat of Moses”

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matt. 11:21).

The village of Chorazin is only mentioned twice in the New Testament — in Matthew 11:21 and the parallel text in Luke 10:13. In these passages Jesus pronounces a “woe” unto the village because they witnessed so many mighty works that he had done, but they had not repented of their sins and turned in obedience to him. The passage is positive proof that Jesus frequented Chorazin and did many mighty works there.

Chorazin is located two or three miles north of Capernaum. When Jesus left Nazareth, he made Capernaum his second home (Matt. 4:13). He preached in the surrounding vicinity,

including in the village of Chorazin.

Excavations at Chorazin are very interesting. “From 1905 to 1907 H. Kohl and C. Watzinger (who also explored the Capernaum synagogue) excavated the synagogue there on behalf of the German Oriental Society. J. Ory for the Palestine Department of Antiquities (1926) and Z. Yeivin for the Israel Department of Antiquities (1962-1963) completed work on the synagogue, the latter also excavating a few nearby houses” (Howard F. Vos, *Archaeology in Bible Lands* 159).

A synagogue of black basalt measuring fifty feet by seventy feet has been excavated and restored dating from the second-third centuries. Though not the same synagogue as is now restored, no doubt Jesus visited the synagogue at Chorazin that existed in his day.

One of the things found in the synagogue at Chorazin is a “seat of Moses.” In Matthew 23:2-3, Jesus said, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”

The “seat of Moses” reminds me of the formal chairs that are sometimes placed in the pulpit areas of some church buildings, more for decoration now than any practical use. However, in Jesus’ time, the “seat of Moses” was a prominent seat in the synagogue that was occupied by the presiding rabbi whose pronouncements were almost equivalent with the words of God himself. Having witnessed the practice of these first-century rabbis, Jesus condemned it as hypocritical.

Also located at Chorazin is the Jewish *miqveh* or ritual bath for ceremonial cleansing.

Reconstructed 3rd or 4th century  
synagogue at Chorazin

6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana  
46122





# One Container?

Patrick T. Donahue

Reasons why the “cup” of the Lord’s supper is not the container:

1. Metonymy is being used in every place that the “cup” is referred to.

2. In metonymy, a single container named, does not mean that the contents of single container is being suggested.

3. Even if it could be proven that Jesus started with only one container, the number of containers used by the disciples to drink still could not be determined from the language of the communion passages.

4. This cup is the new testament.

This article is intended to disprove the contention that one container, and one container only, must be used to distribute and drink the fruit of the vine in the Lord’s Supper. This will be done in four steps.

First it will be shown that every time that the communion “cup” is referred to in the New Testament, the “cup” refers by metonymy to the contents, and not to the container. Secondly, when metonymy is being used, and a single container is named, that does not necessarily mean that the contents of a single container are under consideration. These two points will prove then that it cannot be known how many containers Jesus started with in the institution of the communion ordinance, and if the number cannot be known, the number certainly cannot be bound. The third part of this article will show that, even if it were known that Jesus started with only one container, the language of the pertinent passages would still allow for the disciples using their own containers to drink from Jesus’ container. And since the language could go either way, either way must not be bound as biblical law. Lastly, this article will deal with the contention that the container represents the New Testament, and therefore becomes the third element in the communion.

## Part I. Metonymy Is Being Used In Every Place That The “Cup”

### Is Referred To

It is true that a definition for “*poterion*” (the Greek word translated “cup”) is given by Arndt & Gingrich as “cup, drinking-vessel.” However, another meaning or use must not be overlooked. Arndt & Gingrich states that in some cases, “The cup stands, by metonymy, for what it contains.” By examining the contexts of the communion passages, and comparing them together in parallel, it will be shown that this meaning, the metonymy meaning, should properly be applied to *every* place that the communion cup is referred to in the New Testament.

From Matthew 26:27 and Mark 14:23 (Jesus “took the cup”) by themselves, one cannot tell if metonymy is being used or not; it could go either way. For example, Matthew 26:27 could mean, “And he took the container, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of (out of) the container.” It could also mean, “And he took the fruit of the vine (by metonymy), and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of the fruit of the vine.” But by comparing them to their parallel passage, Luke 22:17 (“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and *divide* it among yourselves”), it is seen that Jesus was talking about the contents all along: the container is not divided, only the contents.

Sometimes, one container preachers will respond to this point by saying that “the cup is divided by drinking the cup.” This is one possible way of dividing a cup, but when the cup is divided by drinking from it, what is divided, the container or the contents only? Obviously the container is not divided in any sense. The question is not “How is the cup divided?” The question is “What is being divided?” Luke 22:17 then, proves that the “cup” in Matthew 26:27 and Mark 14:23 refers not to the container, but to the contents only (by metonymy).

## **Part 2. In Metonymy, A Single Container Named, Does Not Mean That The Contents Of Single Container Is Being Suggested**

Thus far it has been proven from Luke 22:17 (divide the cup) that metonymy is being used when the Bible says in Matthew 26:27, Mark 14:23, and Luke 22:17 that Jesus “took the cup.” It will now be shown that therefore the number of containers that Jesus started with cannot be determined from these verses, because if metonymy is being used, one cannot tell how many containers are actually present, from the fact that only one container is named to suggest the contents.

This concept can be illustrated with a familiar analogy from the world of sports. If it were said, “The bench scored 25 points for Alabama’s basketball team last night,” would it be understood that the actual bench that the players sat on scored the points, or that Alabama’s substitute players scored the points? This is another example of the use of metonymy, where the container named (bench) stands for the contents (substitute players). Notice from this illustration that the players only are referred to, the literal bench did not score a single point. Notice also that the substitute players would be called the “bench” (singular), even if the substitutes actually sat on two or more literal benches, or even “individual” chairs as they do at Alabama basketball games today. The substitute players would still be

called the “bench,” even if there were no literal bench present at all (as at my Junior High football games, where the players had to stand). You see, just because one bench (container) is named, that does not necessarily imply that the contents (players) of only one bench are being discussed.

This concept critically refutes a false metonymy rule first invented by Ervin Waters in the famous Porter-Waters Debate. Mr. Waters stated the rule as, “Since one cup was named, the contents of only one cup are suggested” (80). In addition to the “bench” example that has already been given, other examples that illustrate Mr. Waters’ rule to be patently false follow:

Matthew 18:16 reads, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” Here “mouth” is a metonymy, container for contents (words). Notice that “mouth,” which is singular, is named to suggest the words of more than one person’s mouth.

“The four waiters served a Chinese dish at the football banquet.” Does this necessarily imply that the caterers served the dish using only one literal platter?

“He was dealt a good hand in the poker game.” If he held the cards in two literal human hands, would that mean that he was dealt two hands?

“She raised her children on the bottle.” Does this mean that the mother used only one literal bottle the whole time, or does “bottle” (singular) refer (by metonymy) to the contents of a plurality of literal “bottles”?

“The man started hitting the bottle.” Would this only describe a man who always drank his alcoholic beverage from the same (one) literal bottle?

“Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils” (1 Cor. 10:21). Does this forbid

using more than one table to place the Lord’s Supper on?

“Lucy and Ethel drank a cup of coffee together,” even though each one drank the contents of one container, for a total of two containers.

As a matter of fact, the very opposite of Mr. Waters’ rule is true; when wanting to refer to the contents of more than one container, one would normally only name one container. Examples are: If at a football banquet, the caterers served a Chinese dish on two platters, would it be said that they served the main dish, or the main dishes? If the poker player holds his set of cards with both hands, would it be said that he had a good hand or good hands? “Alabama’s benches scored 25 points”? “She raised her children on the bottles”? “The man started hitting the bottles”? “Lucy and Ethel drank cups of coffee together”? (describing their drinking the contents of one container apiece)

## **Part 3. Even If It Could Be Proven That Jesus Started With Only One Container, The Number Of Containers Used By The Disciples To Drink Still Could Not Be Determined From The Language Of The Communion Passages**

Parts 1 and 2 of this article have shown that it is impossible to tell how many containers Jesus started with in the institution of the Lord’s Supper, whether one or more than one. But in Part 3 it will be granted that he started with only one, just for the sake of argument. It cannot be determined from the texts how many Jesus started with, but if it could be determined that he started with only one, would that prove that the disciples all put their mouths to that one and the same container to drink from it? The answer is, absolutely not.

Some argue that Mark 14:23 (“And he took the cup, . . . and they all drank of it”), for example, teaches that all the disciples drank from (that is, put their lips to) the same container. But this

**The question is not “How is the cup divided?” The question is “What is being divided?” Luke 22:17 then, proves that the “cup” in Matthew 26:27 and Mark 14:23 refers not to the container, but to the contents only (by metonymy).**

language does not imply that at all. An everyday example, and then a Bible example, will be given to illustrate that the one-container brethren’s reasoning on this point is false.

A group of four young men may go to the Pizza Hut and order a pitcher of coke. They would all drink *of*, “from out of, out from, forth from, from” (definition of “*ek*” — Thayer, 189; translated “of” [the cup] in Matt. 26:27, Mark 14:23, and 1 Cor. 11:28) that pitcher, but they would not all put their lips to that pitcher. Instead, the contents of the pitcher are first poured into individual glasses, and the boys drink from that one pitcher by putting their lips to their own individual glasses. From this illustration, it should be easy to see that the disciples could drink fruit of the vine “out of” (*ek*) a drinking vessel by first pouring into other drinking vessels, and then drinking, just as a group can also drink “out of” a pitcher by pouring into glasses first, and then drinking.

A Bible example that illustrates the same point can be found in John 4:12 which reads, “Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof (*ek*) himself, and his children, and his cattle?” Notice that the word “thereof” comes from the same Greek word (*ek*, Strong’s #1537) that is translated “of” (the cup) in Matthew 26:27, Mark 14:23, and 1 Corinthians 11:28. Now, who drank from the well? The answer?: Jacob, his children, and his cattle. Did they all put their mouth to the lip of the well (container)? Obviously not. Or did they all drink from the well by transferring the liquid into separate containers first? Obviously it is possible to drink from (*ek*) a container by transferring the liquid from that container to other containers first, and then each person drinking from his or her own container. Since the Greek is exactly the same in John 4:12 as it is in the communion passages, how do we know that the disciples did not take a literal container and partake from it by pouring it into their own containers first, and then drinking? We don’t know; that is the point! There is more than one way to drink from (*ek*) a container. The truth is, the one container brethren do not, and cannot know if the disciples all put their lips to the same container

to drink from it. Yet they bind that it must be done by this method anyway!

So even if it is assumed that Jesus started out with only one container, that would not prove that the disciples all put their lips to that one container to drink of (*ek*) it. The following summarizes the points that have just been made with the Pizza Hut pitcher and Jacob’s well illustrations.

All put lips to the same container to drink?

Drank from the same container by first transferring to separate containers?

The four boys drank of the *pitcher* at Pizza Hut.

Jacob, his children, and his cattle drank of (*ek*) the *well* (John 4:12).

Jesus’ disciples drank of (*ek*) the *drinking vessel* (Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:23; 1 Cor 11:28).

Upon examination of the above, the point is easily made and understood. Why must Mark 14:23 (and Matt. 26:27) have to mean that the group all put their lips to the same container to drink, when it doesn’t mean that in the other two cases? It is the same in the Greek/English in all three cases!

Another illustration will review what has been shown in Parts 1 through 2 of this article. In this illustration, the idea of a “dish” is going to be used, since that is the closest thing to the idea of a “cup.” Both words name containers, one for holding food, the other for holding liquid. In addition, both are commonly used in the metonymical sense, that is, the container is named to refer to the contents.

Suppose that about 100 people were gathered for an annual high school football banquet. Notice the following sentence describing an event at the banquet: “When the caterers brought in the main dish, some of the players groaned and said, ‘it’s a Chinese dish.’” Does this sentence prove that the caterers used only one literal platter to bring in the Chinese dish to the group of 100, or is it possible that the language allows for two or more platters being used? The conclusion is that just because the word “dish” is singular, that doesn’t prove that only one literal platter was present. That’s because metonymy is being used.

The next event that occurred at the banquet will be described with three different sentences, all saying the same thing, and referring to the same event. Notice that these three sentences will all be in the exact same words as the gospel accounts of the institution of the communion; the only words that will be changed (put in italics) will be the words that will change the sentences from talking about the “cup” to talking about the “dish.” For the sake of argument, it will be assumed in this illustration that all of the Chinese main dish was served on one literal platter.

Nonetheless, the coach stood up, Matthew 26:27 — “And he took the *dish*, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *eat ye all of it.*”

Mark 14:23 — “And he took the *dish*, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all *ate* of it.”

Luke 22:17 — “And he took the *dish*, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves.”

Now, do these three sentences prove that all of the 100 guests ate off of just one literal platter, or does the language allow for them passing the serving platter around, and taking some off onto their own individual plates before they ate the Chinese dish? Everybody can tell that the language certainly allows for individual containers, or plates (for food). So if the language is exactly the same as in the communion passages, why is it so hard to see that the language of the communion passages also allows for individual containers (for liquid)? The point? Since one cannot know how many containers were used, then one cannot bind the number, either way!

#### **Part 4. This Cup Is The New Testament**

In order to try to show that the number of containers used in the communion is not just incidental, the one container brethren make the container (holding the fruit of the vine) a third element in the communion. They agree that the bread represents Jesus’ body, and that the fruit of the vine represents Jesus’ blood, but in addition to that, they add a third element, the container, which they say represents the New Testament. Their proof texts for this third element are the phrase, “This cup is the new testament in my blood”(Luke 22:17 and 1 Cor. 11:25). On the surface this sounds good, but upon closer examination it is found to be incorrect.

By looking at the context of Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25, it can be clearly shown that the “cup” (is the new testament) refers not to the container at all, but to the contents of the container. First of all, most every one-container brother will agree that the “cup” referred to in Luke 22:20 is the same “cup” that is referred to in Luke 22:17. That is basic context hermeneutics. But the “cup” in verse 17 is a cup that can be divided: “And he took the cup, . . . and said, Take this, and divide it (the cup) among yourselves.” Since the cup of verse 17 is a cup that can be divided, and since the container is not divided in any sense, but only the contents are divided, therefore the cup of verse 17 is referring by metonymy to the contents only. And since the cup of verse 20 is the same cup as the cup of verse 17, the cup of verse 20 also refers by metonymy to the contents only. So verse 20 is teaching that the contents only (the fruit of the vine) “is the new testament in my blood.”

Next, by the same contextual analysis that we just did on Luke 20, we can also prove that the “cup” of 1 Corin-

thians 11:25 is referring by metonymy to the contents only, that is, the fruit of the vine. Notice in verse 25, right after Jesus said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood,” he says, “this do ye, as oft as ye drink it (the cup), in remembrance of me.” Notice that again. He said that the cup is something that you drink. Does one drink the container? One can drink from a container, but one does not drink the container itself in any sense. As a matter of fact, the *only* thing that is drunk is the contents. This is verified further by reading on in the immediate context. In verse 26, Jesus says, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup . . .” Drink what? The cup. Container or contents? Easy to see isn’t it? In verse 27, Jesus says, “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” Repeating the point, a cup that one can drink is not a container. One does not drink the container in any sense. It is obviously a metonymy, the container put for the contents. One drinks the contents only.

Notice something else that proves that the cup in 1 Corinthians 11 is referring (by metonymy) to the fruit of the vine. Verse 27 teaches that one who eats the bread unworthily is guilty of the body of the Lord. How is that so? Because the bread represents his body (v. 24). Verse 27 also teaches that if you drink the cup unworthily you are guilty of the blood of the Lord. How could that be? Using the same reasoning, because the cup (contents, not container) represents his blood (Matt. 26:28).

So if anything in the communion represents the New Testament, it is the fruit of the vine, not the container. If this is the case, the fruit of the vine would represent two things, the New Testament and Jesus’ blood. But is that what the two verses are teaching? No, the fruit of the vine (not the container) is the subject of the two verses, but they are not teaching that the fruit of the vine represents the New Testament. They are teaching the same thing as Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24 (“this [fruit of the vine] is my blood of the new testament”), that the fruit of the vine represents the blood that ratifies the New Testament. I challenge my one container brethren to do what I have done and draw up the communion accounts (Matt. 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, Luke 22:17-20, and 1 Cor. 11:23-25) side by side in a parallel. In doing so, one will discover that every phrase in each account means the same as its parallel in the other accounts. If “this cup is the new testament in my blood” does not mean the same as “this is my blood of the new testament,” then they would be the only parallel phrases in the accounts that have different meanings. To the contrary, it is obvious that the phrases are parallel, and therefore they do mean the same thing.

At this point, it would be good to compare Luke 22:20 (and likewise 1 Cor. 11:25) with 1 Corinthians 10:16. 1 Corinthians 10:16 (“The cup of blessing which we bless,



is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?") teaches that the contents represent the blood, even though by the one container brethren's reasoning on Luke 22:20, it (1 Cor. 10:16) would have to teach that the container represents the communion (the sharing, joint participation). The following chart compares the two verses.

Notice that in 1 Corinthians 10:16: The "cup" does *not* represent the communion (the object of the verb). Instead, the "cup" (contents) represents the blood (the object of the prepositional phrase) Luke 22:20 is the same sentence structure: The "cup" does *not* represent the New Testament (the object of the verb). Instead, the "cup" (contents) represents the blood (the object of the prepositional phrase).

Although 1 Corinthians 10:16 is not parallel to Luke 22:20 in every respect, the ways in which it is parallel show that the one-container brethren's treatment of Luke 22:20 is faulty. The truth of the matter is that "this cup is the new testament" contains not only a metonymy, container (cup) for contents (fruit of the vine), it also contains a metonymy, the effect put for the cause. Following are a few examples of this type of metonymy.

In John 11:25, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life." Here, Jesus is the cause of the resurrection, and the cause of life. Jesus is said to be the effect (resurrection, life), though he literally is the cause of the effect. In the

sentence, "Alcohol was the death of him," alcohol is stated as being the man's death, but it was actually the cause of his death.

In the example, "A hot pepper dish turned out to be the dreaded sickness," the hot pepper dish is said to be a group of peoples' sickness, but it actually is the cause of their sickness.

Similarly, in Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25, "This cup is the new testament in my blood," the cup (fruit of the vine), the blood, is the cause of the new testament (it ratifies it). The cup (fruit of the vine), the blood, is said to be the effect (the new testament), though it literally is the cause of the effect.

As already mentioned, if this is not so, and the cup actually represents the New Testament, then the cup is still the contents. This is indisputable in Luke 22 and 1 Corinthians 11, else one divides and drinks the container.

### Conclusion

What has been proven is this: Since metonymy is being used in every case that the communion "cup" is referred to, one cannot know how many containers Jesus started out with in the institution of the Lord's Supper. But even if one could prove that Jesus started with only one container, it still could not be proven that the disciples all put their lips to that one container to drink from it. Therefore, since one cannot know the number of containers that were used in the institution of the communion, one cannot, and must not, bind the number of containers that brethren should use today.

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# Where Is Their Fear?

Norman W. Fisk

The truth and logic of the Gospel are being slaughtered daily on the altar of liberal ideology. Preachers, elders, and churches once standing as defenders of righteousness have drifted off the straight and narrow path and are now stuck in the rut of denominationalism. Over the years I have watched and agonized as many of my brothers and sisters in Christ have slowly digressed from the sure foundation of God, building their houses upon the ever drifting sand.

It is a slippery slope which will end, as the Lord said, in a “great” fall (Matt. 7:21-27).

I have never understood the “reasoning” of those who substitute the security of truth for the “feel good” concept of liberalism.

The “unity in diversity” concept has opened the door for every kind of error to be practiced by those who once would have never allowed such. Faith only, instrumental music, no Lord’s supper at evening services, no classes, putting the church in business, divorce and remarriage for any reason, and even the acceptance of homosexual activity are only a few of these now accepted ideas by some. It matters not how old or new these ideas are error is error, sin is sin.

The fear of God has vanished from the hearts of many. When Paul wrote “. . . knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . .” (2 Cor. 5:11b). It was a concept he well understood. The wise Solomon addressed this same issue when he pinned these words: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). Many have lost this very important ingredient of faith and are unafraid to change, twist, pervert, and circumnavigate the truth.

Recently I sadly watched as a small congregation was ambushed by a few predator members, including the preacher, leaving it in shambles. They lied to and deceived the honest folks into a situation which left them without a place to meet. The “leaders” made arrangements to rent the building to another group without informing the other

members. They then joined themselves to a liberal group in the same town taking several with them. They also robbed the treasury sending most of it to a liberal preacher in another country.

I am reminded of Paul’s pleading to the elders from Ephesus when he said, “Also from among yourselves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:30). Paul, in quoting the Psalmist, wrote, “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:18). Some seem to ignore the consequences of sin. Paul goes on to put all this into perspective by saying: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of God, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad”(2 Cor. 5:10).

Just as Israel ignored God’s pleading and warning against practicing error, many today have lost the most important ingredient of knowledge, wisdom and faith. *Where is their fear?*

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## Training Up A Child

by Gwendolyn M. Webb

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# Is Revelation Continuous or Completed?

Ron Halbrook

There are two views of divine revelation today. One view holds that God has continued to provide new revelations of his will throughout history, that he is still doing so today, and that he will continue doing so in the future. The other view is that God has completed revelation in its final form; therefore, there are no new revelations today and there will be none in the future. Which view does the Bible teach?

During Old Testament times, revelation was continuous as God raised up one prophet after another. “God who at sundry times and divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1). The Old Testament writings were summarized as the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms, all written by the inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit over a period of 1,400 years (Luke 24:44; 2 Pet. 1:21). During the centuries when these revelations were being given, God taught his people to look forward to a new age of revelation.

In Joel 2:28-32, God promised that in the future age of revelation he would speak through “all flesh,” i.e., both Jews and Gentiles, rather than through Jews alone. The purpose of this new dispensation of God’s grace was that all men might have the hope of salvation through “the name of the Lord.” In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God said, “Behold, the days come . . . that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Israel and Judah were separated when this prophecy was spoken, but God was teaching them both that the new covenant to be revealed in the future would provide the same salvation to all men.

Christ came to reveal the fullness of God’s “grace and truth” (John 1:14-18). This work was begun during his personal ministry on earth and completed through his Apostles. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to provide the Apostles with a complete and final revelation: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into

all truth” (John 16:13). All truth would be revealed during the lifetime of the Apostles. That means no new truth would be revealed after the last Apostle died about A.D. 96.

## New Revelations Today?

The miraculous gifts necessary in the age of new revelation included prophecies, speaking foreign languages without previous study, and special knowledge given by inspiration. When the new revelation was completed, those gifts would “cease” and “vanish away.” As Paul was receiving these new revelations, he explained that they would end when the whole body of new truth was delivered: “For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Thus, whereas the Old Testament pointed forward to a new age of revelation, the New Testament taught that revelation was to come in perfection, completion, and finality through the Apostles. By promising the completion of this work during the life span of the Apostles, the Lord taught that all revelation would be given by the end of the first century.

God’s final revelation is “the perfect law of liberty” — it needs no addition (Jas. 1:25). The revelation given to us by Christ through his Apostles provides us with “all things which pertain unto life and godliness,” and we are warned not to add to or subtract from that revelation (2 Pet. 1:3; Rev. 22:18-19). Instead of seeking new revelations, we must teach only what is already revealed in God’s word: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). We are to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” which means we must reject all claims of newly revealed truth as false (Jude 3; Gal. 1:8-9).

All claims that spiritual life and godliness may be found in doctrines and theories not clearly revealed in the New Testament are utterly false. Many false teachers have gone out into the world claiming continuous and progressive revelation today. The Roman Catholic Church claims

# Overcoming Temptation

Heath Rogers

When we become a Christian we become a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). We rise from the regenerating waters of baptism to live in the newness of life (Tit. 3:5; Rom. 6:4). As Christians, God expects us to live a life free from sin. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin . . . likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Rom. 6:6, 11-13).

We know that we aren't supposed to sin. We know we must overcome temptation. The question is not "Can

it be done?" Jesus did it (Matt. 4:1-11). The question is "How can it be done?" What can we do to overcome the temptation to commit sin? Is there anything we can arm ourselves with? Does the Bible offer any suggestions at all? Yes it does.

## Understanding Temptation

One of the best things that we can do to overcome temptation is to understand how temptation works. Temptation works through our desires and lusts. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15). If we have a desire, lust or appetite for something, then the devil has the bait. That bait comes in three forms. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father,

that when the Pope speaks "ex cathedra" (from his chair), he speaks infallibly by divine inspiration. Both Roman Catholic and Protestant councils often profess to speak their unique doctrines and peculiar dogmas under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy pawned herself off as the prophetess of a new Christian Science. Ellen G. White is the fraudulent prophetess of the Seventh Day Adventist movement. Joseph Smith and the twelve modern Apostles of Mormonism offer "another testament of Jesus Christ" in the Book of Mormon and other professed prophetic pronouncements. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of the Jehovah's Witnesses claims to be God's faithful and wise servant as a channel of revealing new light on the Scriptures, and that no one can understand the truth of God's word without this additional light. Many claims to new prophesies, "speaking in tongues," and other forms of inspired knowledge are made by various Pentecostal and charismatic people today.

God warned us that Satan would try to advance his

cause with a fraudulent display of "power and signs and lying wonders" in order to deceive those who do not love or believe the truth (2 Thess. 2:9-12). God commended Christians who tested "them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Rev. 2:2). In the same way today, all claims of new revelations are proven to be false when tested by the word of God.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When it comes to matters pertaining to the salvation of the soul, the Bible contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We need no new prophecies or other new revelations of any kind today. The Bible alone is complete and perfect, and equips us fully to serve God and save our souls.

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but is of the world” (1 John 2:16). The “lust of the flesh” is something that will make us feel good, something that will satisfy a physical desire. The “lust of the eyes” is something that looks good and makes us want it. The “pride of life” is the opportunity to better ourselves, to improve our status or position, to make us feel better about ourselves.

We don’t all have the same desires, but we all have desires. Temptation is when our desires are appealed to and encouraged to be fulfilled. It is kind of like fishing. Different baits catch different fish, but they all work on the same principle. If we can understand what is happening when we are being tempted, we stand a better chance of recognizing it and stopping it. After all, we are smarter than a fish, aren’t we?

### **Don’t Put Yourself In A Situation To Be Tempted**

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14). We are not to go out looking to be tempted. We are not to put ourselves in temptation’s way.

Several people in the Bible have made this grave mistake. Lot “pitched his tent toward Sodom” (Gen. 13:11-13). We know what happened to Lot. It all came about because he intentionally put himself in the company of sinners (1 Cor. 15:33). King David was in the wrong place at the wrong time (2 Sam. 11:1-2). He should have been out with the other kings in battle. But instead he was where he could see Bathsheba bathing. He desired her, committed adultery, had her innocent husband killed, lost the child, and had another son rebel against him. All because he was where he shouldn’t have been. Peter followed the Lord “afar off” (Matt. 26:57-58). Instead of staying with the Lord, he was in the company of strangers. It was there that he was able to do the unthinkable, he denied the Lord.

Too many Christians are all too willing to play with fire. It is foolish knowingly and willingly to put ourselves in a situation to be tempted. The Bible tells us that we are to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22).

### **Flee! Get Out While You Can!**

When we find ourselves in a sinful situation we are to get out of it. “Flee fornication” (1 Cor. 6:18); “flee from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:14); “flee these things” (1 Tim. 6:11); “Flee also youthful lusts” (2 Tim. 2:22). “Flee” means to escape, get away, run for your life. Thayer says it is “to seek safety by flight, to escape safely out of danger.” I have a feeling that too many of us fail to see the “danger” that temptation poses. Our world has taken the bite out of sin for us. Sin is no longer a bad thing for many people, including many Christians. Instead of running away from sin, we attempt to explain away our sin. We have concocted all kinds of excuses for people who happen to be caught up in sin. It is not their fault, it is somebody else’s. But Christian, you

are a child of God! You are not to engage in sin thinking you can excuse it, you are to run from sin hoping you can escape it (1 Cor. 10:13)!

### **Protect Your Heart and Mind**

If we can keep in control our minds, we have a better chance of overcoming temptation. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:6-8). We are to “put on Christ” (Rom. 13:14) and “walk in the spirit” (Gal. 5:16). This is a lifestyle, and a lifestyle occupies the mind.

Jesus quoted Scripture when overcoming temptation (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). Have we filled our minds with Scripture? The Bible tells us to meditate and think on certain things for a reason! It is a way of protecting the heart and mind. Assembling for worship equips us with the strength and determination to fight on and resist temptation (Heb. 10:24-26). Prayer is useful — no — essential if we are going to overcome temptation (Matt. 6:13). Are we putting on the armor of God to protect ourselves from the wiles of the devil, or are we walking out into the battleground naked and defenseless (Eph. 6:10-17)? If we will make it harder for the devil to tempt us to sin, then it will be easier to overcome temptation.

### **Repent**

“I did repent when I obeyed the gospel!” Yes, then you sinned again. Repentance is an ongoing process. To repent means to turn. We must stay turned from sin and towards God. Temptation is constantly calling upon us to return to our sinful habits. When being tempted, we have to remember, “No, I repented of that sin to do it no more!” Did you really repent of your sins when you obeyed the gospel? Did you really repent, or were you just sorry about your sins, knowing that you would most likely commit them again if given the chance? True repentance is lacking among God’s people today.

Just saying that we are not to sin — that doesn’t help very much. We all know that. The question is “How do we overcome temptation?” That is information that we desperately need. The Bible tells us that there are some things that we can do that will help us overcome temptation. The question now is “Will we do them?”

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1149 Hwy. 44 E, Shepherdsville, Kentucky 40165



# Heads Are For Thinking

John F. Maddocks

The last time you made a decision did your hand tell you what to do? Or, the last time you took a trip was it your foot or your toe that told you where to go? Of course not! We all know that is not how it works. When it is time to make a decision, in reality when we do any thinking at all, the head is what does it. The head is the housing of our brain. The brain is our command center. I'm sure we would all agree this is so.



Jesus Christ is the head of a body. "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22, 23). "For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let

the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:23, 24). "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). Jesus Christ's body is the church. He is not the head of many bodies (churches, denominations) as some today would teach. Ephesians 4:4 says "there is one body." In a body only the head does the thinking!

Paul, writing to the brethren in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, taught that individually, as part of Christ's body, we are not all the same. Metaphorically, he described some as hands, some as feet, some as eyes, some as ears, and so on. Each part (individual member) has a function (in Eph. 4:16, Paul says each part is of value). Yes, every part has a function, but, that function is not to do the thinking.

At the transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus. Peter was prepared to build them each their own tabernacle. God the Father's reply was, "While he (Peter) was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud over-

shadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matt. 17:5).

In John 6, many of the Lord's disciples had turned away from him (v. 66). In verse 67 Jesus asked his disciples, "Do you also want to go away?" Notice Peter's response in vv. 68, 69, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and to know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

We need to let Jesus do the thinking! What a difference we would see in our world if people would just do this. If instead of, "Well, what I think . . .," people would turn to the Lord for a "Thus saith the Lord." What a difference it would make in our lives if we would just let Jesus, the head, do the thinking!

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## “Virtual Reality” continued from front page

scenes of two unclothed people. It would be repulsive to think of a “live sexual performance” of a man and woman, but every evening this week, hundreds of thousands of people, including Christians, will sit down and settle for the “solution.” Not in “real” terms, but on regular evening TV or at the movie theater.

Author Doug Wilson noticed this hypocrisy in his book *Reforming Marriage*. He states that too many people in the “religious community” have come to justify watching on the screen various activities we would not dream of seeing in the flesh. Things that would embarrass us all if they were real but not embarrass us at all because they are “simulated.” We would be appalled at any real, live scenes of those involved in sexual activity, but people are watching such activity on a regular basis but with only a few video adjustments through the VCR or movie screen. “Love” scenes are produced all the time with two people who are married and couples not married to each other. They press their undressed bodies together in front of millions of people they do not know, and people give their consent by watching such an “emotional scene.” What “sexual scenes” we read about in Scripture that we would never want to watch or do with our next door neighbor, we pay money to watch being “simulated” by two strangers!

Is that enough? I am afraid not! What children do in school, at play, in the street, etc. is oftentimes done because they have seen their parents do the same thing. The same is true for those who view “simulations” of love and passion. They take it to the streets. Literally. On a park bench, huddled in a corner of the mall, or parked on the back row in a theater, a man or woman (young boy or girl) seemed velcroed in a fiery embrace. Hands are wandering, faces are pressed together, and torsos are intertwined. People are staring, but not at a TV show or on the big screen. It is real life. Someone may view such conduct and say, “Ain’t love grand?” Sure it is, but to a point. That point is where private, intimate actions become an exhibition and a performance.

When I went to Florida College, there was enough foresight and wisdom in the administration that they forbade “public display of affection” on campus. Those caught were given demerits. There is a time and place for such to be done (Heb. 13:4), but the public is not the stage for one’s intimate action.

People suppose that watching an unending amount of intimate, caressing, bed scenes will not carry itself any further than the den or movie screen where such is being admired. That is wishful thinking. It is really foolish and naive. This is not only the thinking of the world. This is often the thinking of Christians. “It won’t bother us. It’s a good show.” Paul said, “For I say, through the grace that

was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: but so as to think soberly. . .” (Rom 12:3). What makes it right to gaze with fascination at simulated “public displays of affection” when we would not tolerate a glance at the real thing? It is a rationalization that too many dads and moms have passed on to their children without thinking. It is the type of rationalization we must stop real soon, before “virtual reality” becomes “harsh reality.”

Think on these things:

Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:27, 28).

The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness (Matt. 6:22, 23).

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:12, 13).

If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (Col. 2:20, 21).

“Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22).

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*From Millersville Messenger, Goodlettsville, TN, March 1998*

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## “Personal” continued from page 2

her infants into a lake that they might drown, her defense is that she was molested as a child. Almost any deviant behavior experienced during youth is sufficient to release one from moral responsibility for the most horrible crimes committed as an adult.

The newspaper tells the story of two teenagers from upper middle class homes whose fornication led to the birth of a child out of wedlock. The boyfriend “discards” (a morally neutral word to describe infanticide or baby murder) the baby, but the press portrays the parents as “victims” of the situation!

Ezekiel would remind us that every man is personally responsible for his own behavior. The fact that one’s

father is wicked does not destroy the son's ability to be a righteous man (see Ezek. 18:14-18). Furthermore, the son of the wicked is responsible to God for obedience to the same law as is the son born to the righteous man. Why should one judge the decision of the ungodly man's son to live righteously to be more difficult than the decision of the righteous man's son to live wickedly? Is the Devil easier to understand and obey than is the Lord? Nevertheless, all kinds of unrighteous behavior are being excused on the grounds that how one acts in adulthood is determined by fate based on the kind of parental upbringing that one has. Whatever became of free will?

### **Bad Habits Can Be Conquered**

In an age that is learning that nearly every kind of sinful conduct is addictive, making the guilty sinner somehow less responsible for his sin, we need to be reminded that sinners can break out of the mold of their sin. Ezekiel wrote, "But if the wicked turn away from all their sins that they have committed and keep all my statutes and do what is lawful and right, they shall surely live; they shall not die" (Ezek. 18:21). The wicked obviously can turn away from all of their sins and keep God's commandments. The merciful and forgiving God is willing to forgive their transgressions and receive them into his fellowship. Were this not true, none of us could be saved.

### **Sin's Guilt Is Not Inherited**

A fundamental thesis of Calvinism is refuted by Ezekiel 18:20, that is the teaching of inherited depravity. Sin's guilt is not transferred from one person to another. Ezekiel 18:20 states this principle of divine judgment, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Cain and Abel did not inherit the guilt of Adam's transgressions. They were not born morally depraved because of Adam's sin. They were not born in a state of condemnation because their father sinned. And neither did any other of Adam's descendants inherit the guilt of his transgression.

### **Past Good Works Do Not Keep One Saved**

Sometimes brethren write as if the past good deeds that one did somehow keep a person from suffering the guilt of his transgressions when he sins against God. Ezekiel wrote, "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die" (Ezek. 18:24). The good deeds that Peter had done did not keep him saved when he played the hypocrite at Antioch. His hypocrisy caused him to "stand condemned" (Gal. 2:11). He was personally responsible for his sins. They were not

automatically forgiven because of his past good works, his good intentions, or his general good character.

### **Conclusion**

We need a good dose of teaching about personal responsibility. Teaching about moral responsibility will emphasize free will and what man must do to be saved by the grace of God. Any teaching that states that one can be saved while continuing in the practice of his sin is contrary to divine revelation.

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6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana 46122

# **Obituary**

## **Alexander Bruce Crawley**

August 31, 1906 — February 26, 1998

David E. Dicus

A few years ago, the East Side Church of Christ in Athens Alabama placed a special reclining chair in the back of their auditorium. The purpose of this action was to accommodate one of their elderly members who insisted on attending every possible service. As time went on and failing health took its toll, he had to be all but bodily carried and placed in his seat. But the idea of missing any service he could manage to get to, never crossed his mind.

This is just one example of the respect and acclaim awarded to brother A. Bruce Crawley by all fellow Christians who came in contact with him. He served as an elder of the 77th Street congregation in Birmingham, Alabama for over 40 years. He was especially well known for his wise council and knowledge of the Scriptures. At 90-plus years of age and up to a few weeks of his death, he conducted a weekly Bible class from his bed, which was well attended. Down through the years he was widely sought as a minister of the gospel in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama, although he seldom (if ever) served as a located preacher.

When his second wife, Lavada Johnson Crawley, began to fail in health, they moved to Athens, Alabama to be close to her relatives, the Rollings family. When Lavada passed away, they lovingly continued to look after "Uncle Bruce's" interests until his death. Their love for him was quite obvious. After all, he had been in the family all of their lives.

Brother Crawley held a degree in Law from the Cum-

berland Law School in Birmingham. In addition he held a college degree from Burrit College in Spencer, Tennessee. It was here he met his first wife Wilma Atnip who along with brother Crawley, was also dedicated to Christian pursuits. It was only natural that their son, Bob Crawley, would become well known and widely sought after, as a gospel preacher. He stayed “booked up” for gospel meetings for three to four years ahead, before his untimely death in 1986. At that time he was serving as a located minister in the Lexington, Kentucky area, where he and his wife, Leta, raised their three children, Bruce, Bryan, and Laura.

Brother Bruce Crawley began his humble existence in the rural community of Sale Creek, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he was number eight of nine children.

These other eight Crawley brothers and sisters produced 23 nieces and nephews, many who still live within the Chattanooga area. As an example of his phenomenal ability, brother Crawley recently quoted the name and birth date of all 23.

When brother Alexander Bruce Crawley passed away, the church universal lost a virtual modern patriarch. His knowledge and ability, coupled with his Christian ethics made a lasting impression on everyone who knew him. The memory of the life he lived brings to mind the final words of the Apostle Paul: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7).

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2021 Ridgewood Dr., Chattanooga, Tennessee 37404

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## A Mother in Israel Has Gone Home

James P. and Maria Needham

On May 8, 1998, I will have been trying to preach the gospel for a half century. During those years I have had a diversity of experiences among my brothers and sisters in the Lord; all the way from births to marriages, to baptizing whole families, to seeing people who knew the truth turn away from it, to serious illness, to deaths of both young and old, and to coming to know the best people on earth. In our experiences as preachers we come to know some people who are extra special; who come to mean more to us than we can possibly describe. We also come to know people as nobody else knows them, and they probably come to know us as nobody else does.

I have often stated what I have never heard another gospel preacher say, namely, “preachers, don’t discount or overlook the advice of godly women.” Maybe others have not had the experience along this line that I have. As a young preacher I think I benefitted more from the advice of the good sisters than from brethren. Maybe it is the mother’s touch on how the advice was given, or just maybe they had an insight that men seldom have. Men’s approach to preachers tends to be more antagonistic or adversarial than that of women. I know there are notable exceptions to this, but it is generally true.

In this article it is my exalted privilege and pleasure to pay tribute to a “mother in Israel” who has meant more to me than words can convey. I moved to Louisville, Kentucky in 1961 to work with what became the Expressway church. I lived there almost nine years. I came to know some of

the best people on earth, and we had a very fruitful work, though it was very stormy and unpleasant at times.

**Justice and Elsie Shull** were members at Expressway, and had been members of the old Taylor Boulevard Church for many years. They gave me wonderful encouragement and inspiration in one of the most difficult times of my preaching life. The old Taylor Boulevard church, the largest church in the state, had divided over the institutional issues, and filed a law suit against the conservative brethren (about 200) to bar them from the building. The situation was very disturbing and one in which a preacher needs all the moral support he can get.

I received great support from the elders, and a large majority of the members, and especially from **Justice and Elsie Shull**. Elsie kind of adopted me as a son, and I came to look upon her as my second mother. She often refreshed my spirit and held up my hands in the battle for truth. Compromise was not a thought she ever entertained, and she loved every gospel preacher who had the courage to contend for the faith. She reminds me so much of Paul’s statements about women he had known in the Lord. He admonished Timothy to treat “the elder women as mothers . . .”(1 Tim 5:2), and he said to Philemon, “And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life”(Phil 4:3).



Elsie was both a lovely and a lovable person. She was a woman of impeccable character, physical beauty, and of great influence in the Expressway church. God blessed her with a physical beauty that is seldom seen which she possessed until the day of her death at age 90, but she was no less beautiful on the inside. A more beautiful "mother in Israel" I have never known.

There are many words that fitly describe this very unusual lady, such as: righteous, beautiful, generous, neat, gracious, devoted, lovely, loveable, kind, considerate, motherly, supportive of that which is good, sweet, and a lover of truth. Before the Expressway building was finished, I used to hold Bible classes in the basement of her house, and I stayed with the Shulls during a gospel meeting at Expressway, and I can safely say there never was a neater housekeeper than Elsie Shull. Nothing was ever out of place. Her basement was like a living room. Her laundry was neatly ironed and folded and put in its place as neatly as if it were on display in a department store! She was a neat person!

Elsie lived to the ripe old age of 90 years. We corresponded throughout all the years after I left the work at Expressway in 1969. At age 90 she could write a letter as uplifting and inspiring as she ever could. She not only corresponded with me and my family, but with others she came to know through the years.

She said something to me in a letter when our precious daughter died, whom she had known since infancy, that I have never forgotten and which has been a source of comfort to me ever since. She said, "Jim, don't worry about Karla, she is in a better place." It is my firm belief that the same can now be said of our dear Elsie. If our loved ones can converse with each other in that land beyond the sky, I am sure Elsie is still speaking words of comfort.

Elsie, like most people, was not without burdens in her life, but she bore them with the grace and beauty that was so characteristic of her. Her faith was her bridge over troubled waters. Justice preceded her in death by several years. She lived alone for the rest of her life in the beautiful little house they had shared and which Justice probably built, for he was a carpenter par excellence. Some of her children were not faithful to the Lord, which was one of the bitter realities with which she lived and for which she prayed daily. Thank God she lived long enough to see one of her sons and his wife return to the Lord with a devotion seldom seen. It was a much deserved happiness and an answer to a mother's prayer before she crossed over.

Her only daughter, Bobbi, lost her husband to cancer, and in time she was married to Connie Adams, a well-known gospel preacher. Bobbi, like her mother, is a beautiful person within and without, and has that same devotion to

the Lord exemplified by her sweet mother. Elsie greatly admired Connie and his stand for the truth. She often spoke with sadness of the milktoast preaching that characterizes many pulpits among us today, and with becoming pride of the kind of preaching done by Connie, Grover Stevens, Greg Litmer, the present preacher at Expressway, and others she had known and loved.

She is gone but not forgotten, nor will she ever be by those who knew and loved her. She is one of the many special saints I have known in my life as a gospel preacher and her sweet disposition and spiritual devotion will continue to be an inspiration as long as I am in this tabernacle. I express my heart-felt sympathy to all her family and friends and all who were touched and influenced by this gracious and loveable "mother in Israel." We shall all miss her sweet smile, her beautiful face, and most of all, the inspiration that she was to us all. Heaven is sweeter now!

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1600 Oneco Ave., Winter Park, Florida 32789-1638

## Preachers Needed

**Charleston, West Virginia:** The church located at 873 Oakwood Road, Charleston, WV 25314 is looking for a full-time preacher. Contact can be made by calling 304-346-8177, or with Frank Linville, 304-346-2700, 1314 Thelma Drive, Charleston, WV, 25302.

**Easley, South Carolina:** The West Main Street Church of Christ in Easley is looking for a full time evangelist. Easley is located in the foothills of SC about ten miles west of Greenville in the fastest growing area of the state. The congregation is small with ample potential for growth. At the present time only partial support can be provided. For further information contact Lowell Frazier at 864-878-1909 (E-mail: frazierlc@aol.com).

**Palmer, Alaska:** The Mat-Su church of Christ, P.O. Box 3141, Key Bank Plaza, Palmer, AK is looking for a preacher. They are a small congregation looking for a self supporting preacher. While their number is small their faith is large. They are located in the historic colony town of Palmer, Alaska about forty miles north of the largest city in Alaska, Anchorage. For more information please contact: Philip B. Douthitt (907-696-8885), 10608 Sanford Circle, Eagle River, Alaska 99577-8260. E-Mail address: philipdouthitt@ADMIN.TC.FAA.GOV.

**Racine, Wisconsin:** The church in Racine is looking for a preacher. The congregation there averages 75-80 members. They can provide full support. If interested, please contact Steve Crotteau, 1612 Arthur Ave., Racine, WI 53405, 414-634-1096.