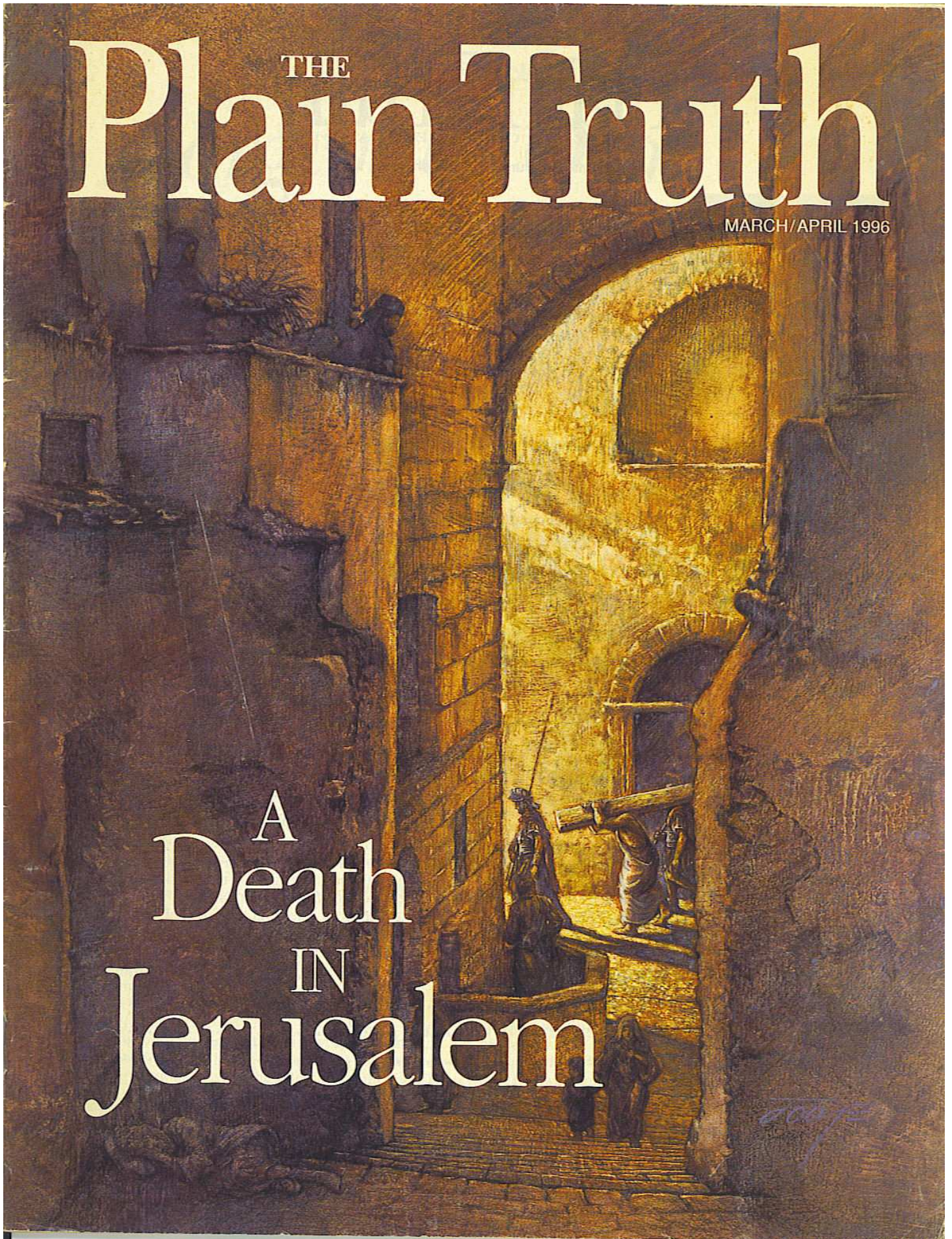


# THE Plain Truth

MARCH/APRIL 1996

## A Death IN Jerusalem





# THE Plain Truth

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

Volume 61, Number 3: March/April 1996



## COVER STORY:

### *A Death in Jerusalem*

In this spring holy day season, Christians once again honor the work of Jesus of Nazareth. His death and resurrection on a spring day more than 1,960 years ago, are historical realities that forever changed the world. Let's recall what those events mean to our personal lives today—and our future.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY JODY EASTMAN

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## FEATURE ARTICLES:



### *Healing the Wounds*

As the third millennium of Christianity approaches, believers worldwide are seeking forgiveness for historical sins and offenses.

### *Dueling Over Doctrine*

Why do Christians so often raise the doctrinal sword against each other?

### *Coming to Know God*

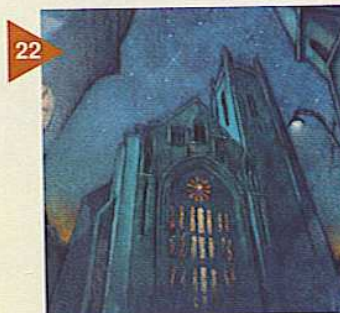
Christ's gospel invites you to satisfy the restless longing all humans share.

### *Tearing Down the Wall*

Once they were enemies. Now they are allies in Christ.

### *"Other" Christians*

All Christians, according to the Bible, claim allegiance to Jesus Christ and worship him as Lord and King. Why, then, are different groups of Christians sometimes so hostile toward each other?



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# Forgive Us Our Trespasses

**A**S REGULAR READERS of this magazine know, the Worldwide Church of God, sponsor of *The Plain Truth*, has changed its position on numerous long-held beliefs and practices during the past few years.

At the heart of those changes has been an acceptance that salvation is by grace through faith. While this was preached in the past, it was always coupled with the message that God owes us a reward for our works that build holy, righteous character.

For decades we regarded scrupulous adherence to the law as the basis of our righteousness. We attempted to relate to God through old covenant rules and regulations in our fervent desire to please him.

In his mercy, God has shown us that old covenant obligations do not apply to Christians who are under the new covenant. He has led us into the riches of his grace and a renewed relationship with Jesus Christ. He has opened our hearts and minds to the joy of his salvation. The Scriptures speak to us with fresh meaning, and we rejoice daily in the personal relationship we have with our Lord and Savior.

At the same time, we are acutely aware of the heavy legacy of our past.

The article "Healing the Wounds," beginning on page 4, explains how the Holy Spirit is working today in the body of Christ to heal historic wounds and restore good relations between offenders and offended. It is my painful responsibility to acknowledge that the Worldwide Church of God has been among the offenders.

Our flawed doctrinal understanding clouded the plain gospel of Jesus Christ and led to a variety of wrong conclusions and unscriptural practices. We have much to repent of and apologize for.

We were judgmental and self-righteous—condemning other Christians, calling them "so-called Christians" and labeling them "deceived" and "instruments of Satan."

We imposed on our members a works-oriented approach to Christian living. We required adherence to burdensome regulations of the Old Testament code. We exercised a strongly legalistic approach to church government.

Our former old covenant approach fostered

attitudes of exclusivism and superiority rather than the new covenant teaching of brotherhood and unity.

We overemphasized predictive prophecy and prophetic speculation, minimizing the true gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ.

These teachings and practices are a source of supreme regret. We are painfully mindful of the heartache and suffering that has resulted from them.

We've been wrong.

There was never an intent to mislead anyone. We were so focused on what we believed we were doing for God that we didn't recognize the spiritual path we were on. Intended or not, that path was not the biblical one.

As we look back, we ask ourselves how we could have been so wrong. Our hearts go out to all whom our



teachings have misled in the Scriptures. We don't minimize your spiritual disorientation and confusion. We earnestly desire your understanding and forgiveness.

We recognize that the depth of alienation can make reconciliation difficult. On the human level, reconciliation is often a long and difficult process over time. Yet we pray daily for it, realizing that the healing ministry of Christ can close even the deepest wounds.

We make no attempt to cover up the doctrinal and scriptural errors of our past. It is not our intention to merely paper over the cracks. We are looking our history squarely in the face and confronting the faults and sins we find. They will always remain a part of our history, serving as a perpetual reminder of the dangers of legalism.

But we cannot live in the past. We must rise above our past. We must move on. We say, with the apostle

*Continued on page 26*



## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

**O**UR COVER reflects the somber side of a joyous time of year for Christians. It reminds us that before we rejoice, we need to remember the sacrifice Jesus Christ made to free us from sin and death.

In his cover illustration, artist Jody Eastman encourages you to picture yourself in the scene. You're climbing the rocky steps when you hear a commotion behind you. You turn to see a bloodied, beaten man staggering down the street under the weight of a heavy wooden beam.

You shake your head. The Roman soldiers are crucifying another Jew. You wonder what this man did to deserve such a horrifying death.

Just another death in Jerusalem? No, this man's death and resurrection are the central event of all history. Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. He died that day so all of us could live.

As senior editor Paul Kroll writes in "A Death in Jerusalem," through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the gap that sin causes between human beings and God has been closed. No matter the mistakes we have made, once we repent we can come in confidence to God knowing Christ's blood covers our sin.

And, while we're on that subject, we thought this would be a fitting time to ask for your forgiveness for teaching and advocating legalism instead of the plain gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ and for attitudes of self-righteousness. Be sure to read Joseph Tkach's "Forgive Us Our Trespases" on page 1.

Department editor Keith Stump points out in "Healing the Wounds," that the Holy Spirit is moving other Christians to repent of times in their past when they have brought shame upon the name of Christ. It's a time of reconciliation. In contributing writer Michael Warren's "Dueling Over Doctrine," you'll learn why this reconciliation is so necessary.

Read the articles in this issue with your mind open to what Jesus Christ has to offer you. It may be only one point in one sentence in one article, but we present these messages to you in the faith that Christ has inspired them to encourage you, to convict you and to lead you closer to him. —Sheila Graham, managing editor

**ABOUT OUR COVER:** Southern California artist Jody Eastman's cover painting brings you into the scene. Along with the cover, be sure to see his illustrations of "A Death in Jerusalem," beginning on page 14.



Senior editor Paul Kroll is author of our cover story, "A Death in Jerusalem."

## THE Plain Truth

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# Mission Statement

## • Who We Are

The *Plain Truth* magazine is published by the Worldwide Church of God. The church has members and ministers in more than 125 countries and territories. The church proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ and helps disciples of Jesus to follow him (Matthew 28:19-20). The gospel announces that redemption and salvation are available through Christ. It also conveys the hope of the future coming of the fullness of the kingdom, beginning with the return of Jesus Christ.

## • How Your Subscription Has Been Paid

Your subscription is provided by those who voluntarily contribute to support this work. We are grateful to the members of the Worldwide Church of God and our extended family of co-workers for their generous tithes and offerings.

Contributions to help us cover publication costs are welcomed, and are necessary, to help us share this message of hope. The Worldwide Church of God, in accordance with responsible Christian stewardship, uses an external, independent auditing firm.

## • Personal Counsel

If you have any questions about the church or our beliefs, please write us at the address nearest you or call us at the toll-free telephone number listed on the inside cover. We want to help you better understand the gospel of Jesus Christ, and have ministers willing to visit you at your request. Visitors are also welcome to attend weekly worship services of the Worldwide Church of God.

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# LETTERS



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## Celestial Messengers

I really appreciated the November issue. What a wonderfully refreshing, sensible, sober, scripturally correct article on angels!

Thank you for extracting these celestial messengers of God from the commercialism that has surrounded them, and returning them to their rightful and revered status.

I also very much appreciated your timely reminder that it's God we seek—not phenomena.

Jeri Becker  
 Frontera, California

## Readers Want to Help

In the December *Plain Truth* is a letter from Jaideo Klemraj regretting the fact of the necessity to suspend the editions going to Brazil. If you would send me his address, I will be glad to mail my copy each month after I finish reading it.

It occurs to me that this may be a good idea to put forth to all your readers for others who will not be getting any issues.

I would appreciate your answer even if you feel you cannot give me the address.

Adeline Grassi  
 Bernville, Pennsylvania

Thank you so much for sending your magazine. I truly enjoy every issue.

In your December issue, there was a letter from Jaideo Klemraj. He said that

his monthly issues had been suspended because of the magazine's financial difficulties. I was wondering if there was any way for you to give me his address so that I could at least mail my copies to him monthly.

I would like it if someone did that for me if for some reason my issues had to be canceled.

Kelly Wiles  
 Chester, Virginia

I challenge all Christians of all religions to donate \$100 or whatever they can afford to help maintain the international editions of *The Plain Truth*!

God bless and keep up the good work.

James Caballero  
 Oxnard, California

• *Because of financial cutbacks we needed to make last spring, we are unable to continue sending The Plain Truth to certain areas of the world.*

*We appreciate your heartfelt concern for those readers who no longer receive The Plain Truth. To protect our subscribers from unwanted mailings, however, our policy is not to give out addresses.*

## True Freedom

The articles in the recent *Plain Truths* have been helpful, enlightening, inspiring and educational. The November issue touched me especially.

The focus on Jesus Christ and his true freedom has disturbed so many in the Worldwide Church of God, and they have left to continue on in a form of slavery and bondage. *The Plain Truth* to them is no longer what is considered truth.

For me the magazine is more filled with truth than ever before, and in that truth I find freedom, help and understanding.

In the article "Finding God" by Clayton Steep, this says it all as to what *The Plain Truth* is about today. "Once we find God, we begin to find fulfillment in life. And we set out on the

*Continued on page 26*



# healing the wounds

*Christians  
worldwide are  
seeking  
forgiveness for  
historical  
sins, errors  
and offenses.  
Here's why.*

**by Keith W. Stump**

**A**S CHRISTIANITY prepares to enter its third millennium, an important phenomenon is sweeping the Christian world. It is a wave of confession and repentance for past sins and offenses against others.

Many Christian groups have recognized a need to repent for those times in history when they or their forebears deviated from the spirit of the gospel, injured others and brought shame upon the name of Jesus Christ.

This mass expression of regret and contrition is unprecedented. Many Christians attribute this wave of repentance to a powerful working of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ worldwide.

They characterize it as a surging tide of God's grace, intended to wash Christianity clean of its historic sins and achieve long-overdue reconciliation—the restoration of harmony and good relations with injured individuals and groups.

## Formal Apology

Perhaps the most widely publicized was the formal apology extended to African-Americans last year by the Southern Baptist Convention for endorsing slavery and condoning racism.

The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant body in the United States, was formed in 1845 in the wake of a North-South split in Baptist ranks over the issue of slavery. The church was silent or actively opposed civil rights through the 1960s and '70s.

"We lament and repudiate historic acts of evil, such as slavery, from which we continue to reap a bitter harvest," the Baptists declared in a resolution passed overwhelmingly at its annual convention last June.

"We apologize to all African Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime," the resolution continued, "and we gen-

uinely repent of racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously or unconsciously."

Gary Frost, a black pastor and the denomination's second vice president, accepted the apology "on behalf of my black brothers and sisters," adding, "We pray that the genuineness of your repentance will be reflected in your attitudes and in your actions."

## Wave of Contrition

The Southern Baptist Convention's resolution against racism is only one example of a movement toward reconciliation aimed at easing bitter memories of the past and healing old wounds:

- Pope John Paul II has declared that the Roman Catholic Church cannot enter the third Christian millennium without purifying itself through repentance of its historical transgressions. In 1992, he apologized in Africa for his church's complicity in the African slave trade, and in Latin America for Catholic exploitation of Native Americans. In 1995, in the Czech Republic, he asked forgiveness for Catholic-Protestant wars in Europe during the Counter-Reformation.

- Hundreds of German Christians gathered in the Netherlands in April 1995 to apologize for Nazi atrocities against the Dutch during World War II.

- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America expressed contrition in April 1994 for the anti-Semitism of its founder, Martin Luther.

- In South Africa in 1991, the Dutch Reformed Church formally apologized to black South Africans for having provided religious justification for apartheid.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu accepted the apology.

- European Christians—Protestant and Catholic alike—are preparing to gather in France this spring to publicly express remorse for the slaying of thousands of Mus-



**John Dawson,  
author and founder  
of the International  
Reconciliation  
Coalition.**

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**Southern Baptist Convention president James B. Henry, right, with Gary Frost, second vice president, after passage of antiracism amendment.**

lims and Jews by European knights in the name of Christ during the medieval Crusades.

Other examples include white New Zealanders confessing sins against the native Maoris; white Americans asking forgiveness for the massacres of Native Americans; and Japanese Christians apologizing for the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.

### **New Beginning**

The reconciliation phenomenon is described in *Healing America's Wounds* (Regal Books, 1994) by John Dawson. A California Baptist, New Zealand-born Dawson is founder of the International Reconciliation Coalition. His organization promotes racial and ethnic harmony by holding rituals of reconciliation at locations where historical wrongs were perpetrated, such as sites of carnage against Native Americans by whites.

Dawson's book is a how-to guide for Christians on becoming instruments of reconciliation between classes, races, nations and cultures. Dawson hopes the confessional trend among Christians will announce a new beginning for Christianity, setting the stage for spiritual revival and productive evangelism once nonbelievers see that Christians are credible and sincere.

"The kingdom of God will be vilified publicly as long as self-righteousness marks our relationship with the world and with each other," Dawson declares.

Evangelist Billy Graham, who spoke at the Southern Baptist Convention meeting last year, also

spotlighted this hope for spiritual awakening when he observed:

"Only when we individually and as a corporate group renounce racism in all of its forms and repent of all transgression will God choose to use us in the future to reach all people throughout the world."

Robert E. Coleman makes a similar point in his book *The Coming World Revival* (Crossway Books, 1995). He explains that the light of Christianity cannot burn bright in the world and ignite the spark of faith in others until genuine repentance is expressed and reconciliation achieved. Coleman notes:

"There can be no revival until we confess our sin, turn from our evil ways, and throw ourselves upon God's mercy.... Not only must confession be made to God; we must do all we can to make things right with people we have wronged. If we try to trim the corners and excuse a few favorite shortcomings, we are fooling ourselves. No revival can come in our hearts until sin is out of the way."

Skeptics question the sincerity of the repentance and reconciliation phenomenon, labeling such moves as "empty gestures," "superficial emotionalism" and "crocodile tears" that will change little in the long run.

Other observers are more optimistic. For example, historian Mark Noll, professor of American

religious history at Wheaton College in Illinois, feels that "the spirit behind this is commendable, especially if it leads to solid steps toward mutual understanding."

### **Christian Obligation**

The need for corporate or collective repentance cannot be minimized. "The greatest wounds in human history, the greatest injustices, have not happened through the acts of some individual perpetrator, but rather through the institutions, systems, philosophies, cultures, religions and governments of mankind," John Dawson observes.

Each of us has a role to play in this large-scale reconciliation. Religious leaders must publicly take the initiative in confession and reconciliation (see "Personal," this issue). And lay members must follow up on such initiatives as individual agents of the healing process.

At the same time, Christians must not overlook those more immediate and personal situations that cry out for repentance and reconciliation. The lesson for each of us in the worldwide wave of repentance is that we all need to change. We personally need to repent, to be forgiven—and to forgive.

All reconciliation must begin with our personal reconciliation to God, made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As sinners, we were "God's enemies"—estranged, alienated from God because of our sins (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:21; James 4:4).

**Two of the 10,000 marchers attend a prayer rally after the May 27, 1995, March for Jesus in Austin, Texas.**





Jesus Christ came into the world to effect reconciliation. He died to put away our sins, to bridge the chasm between us and God.

Christ took upon himself the sin that stood as a barrier between God and humanity.

But reconciliation does not stop with our own salvation. Having tasted of God's forgiveness, Christians now have a twofold obligation: the task of proclaiming to others the reconciling work of our Lord (2 Co-

being. The alternative is an endless, self-destructive cycle of resentment, bitterness and retaliation that hinders not only our relationships with others but also with God (1 John 4:20). "Forgive us our sins," Jesus taught us to pray, "for we also forgive everyone who sins against us" (Luke 11:4).

Christ can transform our dysfunctional relationships into loving friendships. He can break down all barriers that exist between peo-

What if our initiatives are rebuffed? We must exercise love and patience. There are injuries so deep that they dwarf the act of apology. The injured party may need time to come to terms with your offer to reconcile. He or she may be too bitter, confused, hurt, depressed or angry to respond immediately.

If the offended person turns away in hatred or resentment, we must ask God to help the person release his or her bitterness and give up the desire for revenge.

We must continue to look for ways to restore the relationship, rather than for excuses to give up and perpetuate the division.

Conversely, we must not rebuff the efforts of others to reconcile with us. If an offender repents, a Christian must be quick to respond. The genuineness of the sinner's repentance is not your business. It is God's business.

"Forgiveness is not an elective in the curriculum of life," declares Charles Swindoll, a best-selling Christian author, broadcaster and church pastor. "It is a required course, and the exams are always tough to pass."

Forgiveness means to give up what we deserve, to cancel a debt, to wipe the slate clean.

Peter asked Jesus: "'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times'" (Matthew 18:21-22).

Jesus' point was forgiveness is not a matter of calculation. We should not keep track of how many times we forgive someone. Forgiveness must be habitual and continual.

Confronting the past has a liberating effect. Forgiveness is the key to freedom—freedom from anger, from hatred, from bitterness, from resentment.

Resentment keeps one's wounds fresh; forgiveness allows them to heal. Keeping lists of wrongs and holding grudges cripples the soul and cuts one off from God's healing. Love lets the past die.

We must not resist the healing work of the Holy Spirit. □

## return to sender

The parents of the British poet Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861) disapproved so strongly of her marriage to fellow poet Robert Browning that they disowned her. She and her husband settled in far-away Florence, Italy. Yet several times a month, Elizabeth wrote loving, eloquent and moving letters to her parents, seeking a reconciliation. They never once replied.

After 10 years of letter writing, Elizabeth received a large box in the mail. She was heartbroken to discover that it contained all of her letters to her parents—unopened.

Those letters are

some of the most beautiful and expressive in all English literature. Had her parents opened and read them, a reconciliation might well have occurred.

We hurt ourselves the most when we snub the efforts of others to apologize and make amends for their offenses against us.



ELIZABETH BARRETT



ROBERT BROWNING

rinthians 5:18-19), and the responsibility to be personally reconciled with those we have wronged or who have wronged us.

God has forgiven our sins; we must now forgive others. "Be kind and compassionate to one another," the apostle Paul urges, "forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Reconciliation to other human beings is essential for human well-

ple—racial, cultural, social, sexual, national and religious.

### Take the Initiative

How, then, should we proceed?

Take the initiative in confession and reconciliation. Apologize for the hasty words or actions that have created hurt feelings or resentment. And remember, it must come from the heart. As the saying goes, a stiff apology is a second insult.



# Dueling Over Doctrine

**W**HEN JESUS sent his disciples out to preach the gospel, he warned them of the difficulties they would face along the way. They would be persecuted, jailed, even murdered for preaching in his name.

In short, Jesus said, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

None of us should be surprised when the gospel meets resistance from unbelievers. But there's a horrible irony in this passage that is far from what Jesus intended. Very often the division is not between believer and infidel; rather, it's we Christians who raise the sword against each other.

## Around-the-clock Debate

If you've ever toured the religion forums on the Internet on your computer, you know how divided Christianity can be. In one of the forums I inhabit, the debate over doctrine and theology continues literally around the clock.

At its best, the discussion can be healthy and beneficial. At its worst, it degenerates into venomous accusations and merciless condemnation.

Sometimes in our zeal for the truth, we forget things like simple courtesy. Instead of agreeing to disagree about our differences, we're quick to condemn one another.

One pastor in my community lamented that the devil hardly had to worry about losing ground since we Christians are so busy fighting each other.

We can do much to end division in our midst.

It's as simple as returning to the foundation of our calling.

If our attention is anywhere else except on Christ, we're destined for trouble. If instead of looking to Christ for salvation, we look to the law or some special "truth," we're destined to fail.

If instead of looking to Christ for our identity, we look to our understanding of doctrine, we'll forever be doomed to division.

If we expect unity and fellowship with other Christians, it can come only through Christ. Without looking to him, it is impossible.

Each of us must pursue truth and correct doctrine. But if our fellowship is based on how much we agree on every last detail of theology, I think we'd all be very lonely. But if we look to our common Lord instead, we are promised fellowship with a great family of believers.

## Use a Soft Answer

One person I met on the Internet told me he believed he had the prerogative to insult and ridicule people because he was following the example of Elijah and even Jesus himself. Didn't Elijah mock the prophets of Baal? Didn't Jesus call the Pharisees snakes and whitewashed tombs?

Yes, but I wonder if any of us has the ability to know the heart as Jesus did. It seems to me that few, if any, of us can claim a specific commission to speak on behalf of the Almighty.

Jesus called the Pharisees snakes, but he also taught us to turn the other cheek when we're insulted. I believe that if we truly recognize our own condition (as sinners whose only hope is God's grace), then out of humility we would tread lightly when entering into disagreements with fellow Christians.

In Romans 14, Paul said certain matters of doctrine and conduct weren't worth fighting about. These "disputable matters" had to do with external forms of worship.

These are the very things we Christians disagree about. When we blow the details out of proportion, we end up with schism upon schism. If we're looking for real unity in Christ, we can't waste our time wrangling over nonessentials.

There's no doubting Jesus' word. Division between believers and unbelievers will happen. The person and the saving work of Jesus Christ will be an offense to some people. We can expect nothing else.

But division between believers is not something we should accept. Jesus intended for his followers to be united in his name.

His church was to be known for its brotherly love. If we're to meet that expectation, we need to leave the swordplay to Christ. □

*Michael Warren lives in Ocala, Florida. You can reach him on the Internet at Mike-W10071@aol.com.*



## WHY DO CHRISTIANS SO OFTEN RAISE THE SWORD AGAINST EACH OTHER?

by Michael Warren



## WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY? PART TWO

# Coming to

*Christ's gospel  
invites you to  
satisfy the restless  
longing all  
humans share.*

by Norman L. Shoaf

I WAS ABOUT 6 months old when my cousin Rex, then in his early 20s, kissed me on the cheek. I was sitting in my high chair in my family's kitchen in St. Louis, Missouri, and Cousin Rex was about to leave home and head out west to California to find his fortune.

According to family legend, he announced, "Well, that'll have to be enough sugar for my coffee until I see you again."

We didn't see each other again for more than 37 years.

You know how it is. My dad and mom lost contact with Rex. I was too young to know or care who he was. His branch of the family did their thing, and we did ours.

Through the decades, rumor had it that cousin Rex fell on hard times in California, or that he struck it rich. He became a preacher, or he became a wastrel.

Rex was the greatest guy you would ever want to know, or he was wild and dangerous.

### Finding Rex

Last year, I looked up Rex. In an emotional phone call, he said hearing from me had made him so happy that he wouldn't be able to sleep.

He invited me to come see him at his home in northern Nevada. I did, and I took my wife and daughter with me.

I recognized him as soon as I rolled into his driveway, and he recognized me. Happy days and nights of catching up followed our first bear hugs and kisses.

We met his lovely wife, Jane, and their children and grandchildren, all of whom lived nearby. Suddenly my 6-year-old, Lillian, had scads of newly discovered cousins to play with!

No family reunion could have been warmer. Rex was gentle, generous and lovable. As we sat in his beautiful home, he told my wife and me of his adventures as a young man out West.

He related how his family had

grown and flourished. He had built a lucrative business.

He had met and become friends with the late actor Michael Landon. Through the years, with a few rough spots here and there, he had maintained a deep faith in Jesus Christ and was still an active leader in his church.

And, to my delight and to both our wives' half-grimacing tolerance, we learned that he and I are afflicted with the slightly warped (and, really, only slightly funny) Shoaf sense of humor!

### What We All Long For

Family. Home. Close, tender relationships. People who really care. Embracing those we love, and never having to part. Aren't these the blessings that all of us desire most?

But, search as we might, many of us never find them. And no one enjoys them all the time. Relationships break up. People move away. Fam-

ilies lose contact—or never make it in the first place.

There are no perfect homes, at least in this world. Whoever we are, wherever we live, we find ourselves

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all of us  
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# Know God

always searching, searching—but searching for what?

*Loving relationships that last.*

This is exactly what God invites us to—an eternal place in his loving, spiritual family. That's what the gospel of Jesus Christ is—an invitation to come into an intimate, lasting relationship with the perfect parent, brother, friend, provider, teacher and protector.

## The Healer of Hurts

"Come to me," Jesus welcomes (Matthew 11:28). Yet many find it hard to accept this invitation.

Their experiences with their own human families have been so upsetting and sad. Their natural longing for warmth and love has been denied, rebuffed and unfulfilled.

Seeing the ugliness and injustice and abuse in this world, they cannot embrace even the concept of an all-powerful God who knows our weaknesses and troubles and who cares—and who is well able to make things different.

The questions seem too tough, the chasms too wide, the hurts too painful for us.

Yet this is exactly why God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world.

The Bible records how our first parents, Adam and Eve, chose to reject God. They started the world on the sorrowful course it has followed ever since.

But God still loves the world. He has stepped in to rescue us from sin and death.

"God so loved the world," John 3:16 tells us, "that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Jesus came into the world to undo Adam and Eve's tragic failure. They chose death for the human race, but Jesus chose to give us life!

And that life—the full, abundant, joy-filled, worthwhile life we all desire—comes through knowing Jesus Christ our Savior.

"Now this is eternal life," Jesus said, "that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

Through his death in our place, and through his miraculous resurrection from the dead, Jesus closed the breach. He healed the hurt. He corrected the abuse.

Jesus Christ revealed God as a heavenly Father who wants to reunite all of us with him, to gather us around him in a loving, everlasting embrace.

Is it any wonder that the apostle Paul, who personally knew Jesus Christ, declared:

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the

"I pray that  
out of his  
glorious  
riches he may  
strengthen  
you with  
power through  
his Spirit in  
your inner  
being, so that  
Christ may  
dwell in your  
hearts through  
faith."

EPHESIANS 3:16-17



# Is God Calling You?

**D**o not be ashamed to testify about our Lord," wrote the apostle Paul to the young evangelist Timothy. Christ Jesus, Paul assured, "has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace."

Jesus, Paul went on, "has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:8-10).

Through the gospel, God invites us—calls us—to partake of new life through his Son, Jesus Christ, both now and in the world to come. Have you heard God's invitation? How would you know?

If God is calling you, you will believe that the Bible is an accurate record of God's revelation to humanity. The Holy Spirit will guide you to understand and agree with that revelation. You will want to dig out this Book's every gem of truth (2 Timothy 3:16-17). And you will want to live by what the Scriptures say.

You will desire a closer relationship with your Creator. You will want to personally get to know God's Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus' shed blood covers your sins and makes it possible for you to be born again, spiritually. You will want to submit your life to Jesus.

If God's Spirit is leading you, you will feel a powerful sense of purpose in your life, maybe for the first time. You will actually enjoy worshiping and serving your Savior, Jesus Christ. You will see the need to pray, and you will want to pray to God regularly.

You'll be excited about being part of the international, spiritual community of believers that is God's church. Despite the challenges and troubles of life, the

Holy Spirit will bless you with an inner calm unlike any other you've ever known. This is the "peace of God, which transcends all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

If God is working in your life, you will grasp the meaning of sin, and you will be broken up inside because of your own sinful condition. You will realize that Jesus Christ paid the death sentence you deserve, and you will feel an overwhelming gratitude and commitment and faith toward him for having done so. You will come to detest the evil ways of the world, and you will want to take no part in them.

If God is calling you, you will be ready to do the hardest thing a person can do—admit you are wrong. That is, not only have you committed wrong and sinful acts. You *are* sinful, fallen, and in need of salvation.

This is the beginning of real repentance. You will want to change your life—to start doing what God tells you to do.

You will truly appreciate the grace of God in forgiving you and granting you his free gift of new life through his Son. You will feel no greater desire than to praise and worship Jesus Christ in all you think, say and do.

You will want to do all you can to serve and help others. A Christian does so, first and foremost, by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ—by helping to invite others to come to God, just as you yourself were invited.

If God is calling you, you will realize that nothing else matters more than answering that call. If you have read this far and understood what this article has been saying, perhaps it is time to do something about it!

resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11)!

## Coming to Know God

"No one can come to me," Jesus said, "unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). Conversely, he revealed: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

God does the calling. But we must respond. We must be willing to humble ourselves before God, to realize that we can do nothing to save ourselves.

Unless God, in his mercy, grants us his grace, through his Son, Jesus Christ, we are lost.

But God is more than willing to receive us.

We must acknowledge and repent of our sinful state apart from him. We must realize that only through Jesus Christ can we be saved (Acts 4:12). Then we must accept and embrace the Son of God as our Savior and Lord.

Paul wrote, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

## Growing in Knowing

The hardest part of so many worthwhile pursuits is taking that first difficult step.

It would have been easier, for instance, not to call my cousin Rex. After all, I didn't really know him.

How could I be sure that the bad things some family members told me about him weren't true? We might not have gotten along at all. Digging out the phone number and calling were needlessly fearsome hurdles for me.

But from the moment we heard each other's voices, we realized we never should have been strangers in the first place. The 37-plus years of separation after the kiss in my family's kitchen were the tragic result of unintentional neglect.

We got along famously, joyously. *Together* was exponentially preferable to *apart*.

It's the same with one's relationship with God.



It's much easier, of course, to simply not think about that hole in every human heart, that spiritual aloneness that cries out for unity with our Maker.

Before we answer Jesus' invitation to come to him, we don't really even know him. We may have heard a lot of misinformation about God, from ignorant assumptions to outright lies. We may fear that we, well, just won't get along.

Offering up that first prayer, or making that first contact with Christians who enjoy close, robust friendship with Jesus may be needlessly fearsome hurdles.

But from the moment you open the door outside which Jesus Christ stands and knocks, you realize you never should have been strangers in the first place.

However many years you've been apart—perhaps your whole life?—may have been the tragic result of unintentional neglect.

Or confused emotions. Or scars inflicted not by God but by some imperfect human.

Christians who enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus Christ affirm, with the apostle John, "that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us" (1 John 4:13-16).

Our Christian lives, then, consist of *growing in knowing*—knowing and relying on the love God has for us. And we return that love to God through worship and obedience.

We follow where he leads. We patiently continue, throughout our lives, our walk with Jesus Christ.

### "Come to Me"

A church sign near my home reads, "No Jesus—No Peace; Know Jesus—Know Peace."

Christians are born into a loving,

spiritual community, and they know peace, thanks to the work of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ invites you to satisfy the restless longing that all human beings share—the longing for *loving relationships that last*.

You can *know* that you know God by placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as

your Lord and Savior.

In one of the most reassuring pas-

sages in the New Testament, Paul wrote to the Ephesian church: "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19). □

You can *know*  
that you know God  
by placing your  
faith and trust in  
Jesus Christ  
as your Lord and  
Savior.

## A Traveler's Guide

As it would be cruel to an Amazonian tribesman to fly him to London, put him down without explanation in Trafalgar Square and leave him...to fend for himself, so we are cruel to ourselves if we try to live in this world without knowing about the God whose world it is and who runs it."

Such vivid writing characterizes theologian James Packer's million-seller, *Knowing God*, a book that has been printed in more than a dozen languages and become a source of nurture for many Christians.

*Knowing God* is vintage Packer. The crisp, pungent, witty style I remember from his lectures at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, is there in force. For example, the biblical claim that Jesus was fully divine as well as fully human is, claims Packer, "two mysteries for the price of one—the plurality of persons within the unity of God, and the union of Godhead and manhood in the person of Jesus."

But Packer well knows that most

of the questions Christians ask are what he calls "travelers' questions"—which way do I go and how do I get there?

Such practicality keeps this book well read. *Knowing God* does contain theology, but one reason this book is a classic is because Packer makes doctrinal matters accessible to the layman. In Chapter 14, "God the Judge," he probes a head-scratcher: how to reconcile God's mercy with his

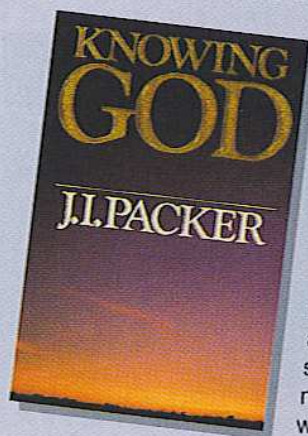
justice. But later in the book, Packer reassures us that God "will not let us ruin our souls."

"Disregard the study of God," warns Packer, "and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you."

*Knowing God* is available from the InterVarsity Press in Downers Grove, Illinois, or through your local Christian bookstore.

*Knowing God* has helped thousands of people. It can help you.

—Neil Earle





# They Call Me "Pop-Pop"

**I** WAS SHOCKED when my oldest daughter came home and told me she was pregnant.

I shouldn't have been. She was old enough, in excellent health, had graduated from college and had been happily married for more than a year to a fine young man with a steady job.

Becki was ready to become a mother. But I wasn't ready to become a grandfather.

I wanted to share my son-in-law's and daughter's (and my wife's—she had no problem with becoming a grandmother) enthusiasm. But the thought depressed me. Becoming a grandfather only happened to old people, and I wasn't ready to be that old.

But the grandchildren were coming, ready or not. Kyle was born in May 1991, and I became "Pop-Pop"—an honorific the family foisted on me without prior consultation.

I had to endure some good-natured teasing from my peers, then they got used to it. But I didn't.

I still haven't. I now realize that becoming a grandparent has been one of the most positive experiences of my life—as a man, as a minister and as a Christian.

Kyle (and then Kelsey, who came along 18 months later) gave me a second opportunity to experience

the valuable lessons of childhood.

So much can be learned from watching a child grow. But you don't get it all the first time around.

For two decades, Pat and I worked to raise our two daughters. We worried about their character, their education, their boyfriends. Their successes were our successes, their failures our own, too. Above all, we loved them.

I love Kyle and Kelsey, too—much more intensely even than I thought I would. But in a different way. I am more detached as I watch them grow up, learning to walk, talk and play.

I try not to meddle, remembering they are someone else's children.

But in another way I am more involved. Because I am not responsible for everyday care, I have noticed the wonder of growing intelligence and awareness with a different perspective.

## Just Pop-Pop!

Kyle and Kelsey are still too young to understand all I do—author, editor, min-

ister, world traveler. Wow! Aren't you impressed? They're not.

To my grandson and granddaughter, I am just Pop-Pop, who can be called upon to read a story, blow up a balloon or watch their video for the 113th time.

It's refreshing. Little children are not intimidated by position, politics

and power. They have unquestioning faith and trust.

They know they are too short, too little, and don't have all the answers. They have no hesitation in asking someone bigger and wiser to intervene in their lives.

They don't see asking for help as a sign of weakness. Pride, vanity and self-assurance haven't taken root yet in their minds.

## As Little Children

As we get older, we feel threatened by inadequacy. Even when born again as Christians, we are reluctant to admit to weakness. We like to feel we can manage. We are slow to admit we need help, and even slower to ask for it—even from God.

I never mind Kyle and Kelsey asking for help. I don't begrudge their mistakes. I am always willing to drop everything—including several times finishing this article—to help them. They presume that they are important to me, and they are. As important as I am to God, who is even more ready to help me, when I am too short, too weak or in other ways inadequate. I just have to ask.

My grandchildren remind me why Jesus told us to become "like little children" if we are to experience the kingdom of God.

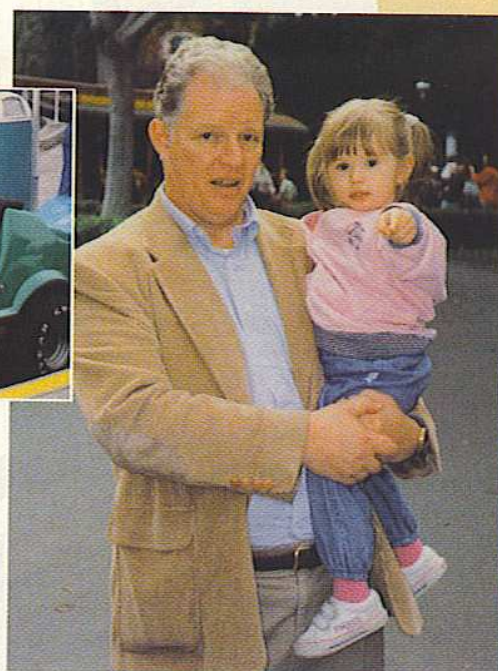
Kyle and Kelsey have made another, even more profound change in the way I look at life. This I would like to share with all readers who are 50-something, even if you don't have grandchildren.

Those two little lives have made





Kyle and Kelsey Parnell, previous page. Kyle, age 4, right, chauffeurs a nervous Pop-Pop Halford around an auto track at California's Disneyland. Author John Halford with granddaughter Kelsey, age 3, at Disneyland.



PHOTOS COURTESY PARNELL FAMILY

me think about the future in a way I have not before.

As you get older, you begin to think in terms of how long you have left. Not morbidly. But the once far-off concerns of old age and retirement become more and more real. Many of us are having anxious moments about pensions, health care and who will take care of us in our old age.

It's easy to become disgruntled and grumpy as you see the world you are used to—the world you to some extent control—slipping away. It's tempting to withdraw and to have the mind-set that the long-term future is not our concern.

Barring accidents, I suppose I can realistically expect to live into the second decade of the next century. But my grandchildren will live through most of it. It's sobering to realize people I know and love now will probably still be alive in the year 2075. Or maybe even longer—life expectancy is increasing.

What kind of a world will it be for them? How will my grandchildren remember me, in say 50 years, as they wrestle with the problems of their world—whatever it is like?

### Pappy and Gran

I remember my English grandparents in a very positive way. Pappy (I think I prefer Pop-Pop) was born around 1880. He was an officer in the *First World War*. We still have carefully posed pictures of him, in his old-fashioned uniform.

It was typical for people of his generation to be concerned for the

world *after they had left it*.

He shared generously his time and expertise. He stimulated my intellectual appetite and curiosity.

I still remember his maps and great piles of *National Geographics*. He taught me about the world beyond my own small nation's shores.

Then there was Gran and her friends—wonderful old ladies. I never really could sort out who they all were or why they were a part of my life. But I am grateful they were a part. They taught me to read and write before I was 4.

I realize now they were doing this at a time when their world was filled with anxiety and their future very uncertain. These were the early days of World War II, and a Nazi victory seemed a distinct possibility.

Gran and her friends set aside their own concerns (some of them were Jewish) and shared their meager wartime resources. In spite of a grim and precarious present, they invested in a little boy's future.

### Staying Involved

Now it's my turn. Kyle and Kelsey have awakened in me a sense of responsibility to do what I can for their world. In little ways, like taking recycling seriously. And in more significant opportunities, as they present themselves.

I have taught a Bible class at a church-sponsored high school. I have volunteered my services in the summer at an annual Christian youth camp. I have spent more time

than I really had to spare raising funds to help friends in Africa run orphanages, as they work to provide a future for some of our world's most helpless little people.

Closer to home, I subscribed to several magazines I didn't really want, just to help an inner-city kid earn a scholarship. (Hey, he might have been someone's grandson.) These days I think long and hard before throwing away an appeal for a children's charity.

I've not made all the difference, but I've made some. Just as the older people made some difference to me.

Kyle and Kelsey remind me to focus ahead, to face and accept change, to recognize the need to remain involved and unselfish.

There's never a time to turn inward, never a time to stop caring. And never a time for us to start thinking our needs, our futures or our well-being are all-important.

We are our grandchildren's keepers, and we must love these little neighbors, and all the millions they represent, as ourselves.

God willing, 50 years from now, my grandchildren will remember Pop-Pop Halford as someone who cared for their future as much as he did his own.

—John Halford





Pontius Pilate agonizes over Jesus' fate. He knew Jesus wasn't guilty of any crime, but the religious authorities demanded his death.

*On a spring day in Jerusalem, a man named Jesus was tortured and executed by the Roman government. But after he died God resurrected him, and the world was forever changed.*

# A Death IN Jerusalem

by Paul Kroll

**J**ERUSALEM seemed to be gripped by a fanatical hysteria during that fateful day on which Jesus died.

Some were shouting that he had blasphemed against God and should be condemned to death. Others accused him of treason against the state, and clamored for his execution.

Jesus' closest disciples disowned him and fled. Many others did follow Jesus to the cross, mourning and wailing for him.

Some hurled insults at him as he was dying. "Let him come down

now from the cross, and we will believe in him," they taunted (Matthew 27:42).

One of the criminals executed with Jesus was profoundly moved, perceiving something special about Jesus—something beyond his humanity. A centurion praised God and said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39).

Strange things occurred that day in Jerusalem. The land was mired in a soupy darkness between noon and 3 in the afternoon. For no known reason, the curtain in front of the temple's Most Holy Place

ripped in two from top to bottom.

Something else happened no one could explain. Tombs broke open and many of those who were dead and buried were raised to life. After Jesus was resurrected, they went into Jerusalem and appeared to many (Matthew 27:52-53).

Earlier, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, agonized over what to do with Jesus. Pilate had been reluctant to sign the execution order as there was no legal reason for doing so. He knew Jesus wasn't guilty of any crime.

But Pilate didn't have the politi-



cal will to resist those who demanded that Jesus be crucified. Finally, to appease the mob the governor simply signed away the carpenter's life.

### Letter From Pilate?

One wonders how Pilate might have explained his actions regarding Jesus to himself—or his superiors in Rome.

Pilate was known for overstepping his authority and for being brutal to his subjects. (A few years after signing Jesus' death warrant, Pilate was ordered to Rome to justify his slaughter of a Samaritan religious group that had massed on Mt. Gerizim.)

Let us assume Pilate felt compelled to justify his execution of Jesus to the emperor in writing. His letter might have looked something like this:

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*To Emperor Tiberius regarding the execution of an insurrectionist from Galilee.*

Greetings:

Your Majesty, I'm writing this letter so you will be aware of an unusual situation in the province of Judea. On the day before the Jews' Passover this year, I executed a man named Jesus, who was from the town of Nazareth.

I thought I would write a personal report to you about this as it is said by some that this man claimed to be a god. The Jewish leaders of Jerusalem told me he had taught everywhere that death would not hold him and that he would rise from the grave, to live again.

But that is not why I felt compelled to have the man executed. He was accused of insurrection and of being the ringleader of a rebel group prepared to overthrow Caesar's government in Judea.

He even claimed to be a king

After Jesus' arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin, which condemned him to death, Jesus is bound and led through the city to appear before Pilate.

himself—a king of the Jews.

When I discovered these things, as a precautionary measure, I authorized a search for the man and had him quickly arrested. His followers scattered into the hills when my soldiers arrived.

I investigated the charges against this Jesus very thoroughly before proceeding against him, of course. Though I was unable personally to substantiate the accusations, the man did have a large following throughout the province. This seemed evidence enough that the indictment against him as a ringleader of sedition was true.

In fact, it was the leaders of our loyal Jewish subjects in Judea—including the high priest—who brought the charges to me. They insisted they had evidence of a plot. Their own ruling body, the Sanhedrin, concurred that this man was guilty of crimes against Caesar, and said he should be crucified.

The accused himself did not deny the charges. In fact, he made no reply to them whatsoever.

In order to preserve Caesar's enlightened rulership in Judea, I thought it prudent to deal decisively

ly with the situation and proceed with the examination of the accused. At its completion, I ordered that he undergo the standard execution by crucifixion outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

After his death, I had the body placed in a tomb. I intended to secure the tomb with our own soldiers, but the Jewish religious leaders objected. They pleaded for their temple police to guard it.

To show concern for our subjects and to keep the peace of Caesar intact, I allowed their police to be involved in the security measures. I also ordered a large stone to be rolled across the entrance of the tomb. Then, I placed a seal on it.

However, a report soon came to my ears that the tomb of this crucified insurrectionist was empty. The Jews said that in spite of their best efforts, the followers of this man somehow had been able to steal the body from the tomb.

I made diligent search but was unable to locate it. Whatever the fate of the body, this man's followers now insist he is alive.

They are making this claim publicly throughout Jerusalem, assert-



ILLUSTRATIONS BY JODY EASTMAN



ing that they speak "in Jesus' name." His followers say he is a god indeed. Because of this many are joining their cause.

That being so, I was uncertain what further course I ought to take regarding the followers of this man they say is still alive. The nature of the situation seemed to justify my writing and consulting you.

Pontius Pilate,  
Governor of Judea

\*\*\*\*\*

And so Jesus was crucified. The world took no notice of what happened that spring day in Jerusalem. Only a few discerned there was

Lacking the political will to resist those who demand Jesus be crucified, Pilate, to appease the mob, simply signs away the carpenter's life by ordering his execution.

something different about this man, though they couldn't quite put their finger on what it was.

Pilate himself only saw Jesus as a political problem to be dealt with. He certainly had no idea that he himself had become a bit player in a momentous historical drama.

The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we know, was the pivotal event of human history. God had sent Jesus to rescue the world from sin by his death. And he was resurrected so we might have eternal life.

Pilate had no awareness of this central *truth* of human history (John 18:33-38). He saw Jesus as just another human standing in his way, not God in the flesh.

### The Rescue

Strangely, many in the Christian world are also not sure of Jesus Christ's identity. Was he the wisest

of wise teachers, but nothing more?

If the answer is yes, Jesus' death could have no special meaning and his claimed resurrection would be a pious fraud.

The central event of all history—Jesus' death and resurrection—has meaning only when we understand his divine identity.

Jesus was more than a good man, mystical teacher or the best of humans. To put it in a terse sentence that describes a divine mystery: Jesus was God in the flesh.

We learn about Jesus' true identity from the first chapter of the Gospel of John. He begins by describing "the Word" as the eternal life that existed from the beginning. This Word was both *with* God and *was* God.

In some mysterious and miraculous way, the Word became flesh—became a human being—and lived with us as the man Jesus Christ.

In Jesus, God "came down" to reach out to humans—to help us to be reconciled to him—and to restore our relationship with the Creator. The apostle Paul spoke of Jesus' work in these very terms.

## Unbounded Love

### UNBOUNDED LOVE: A GOOD NEWS THEOLOGY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

By Clark H. Pinnock, McMaster Divinity School, and Robert C. Brow, the Anglican Church of Canada (InterVarsity Press, 1994), 189 pages.

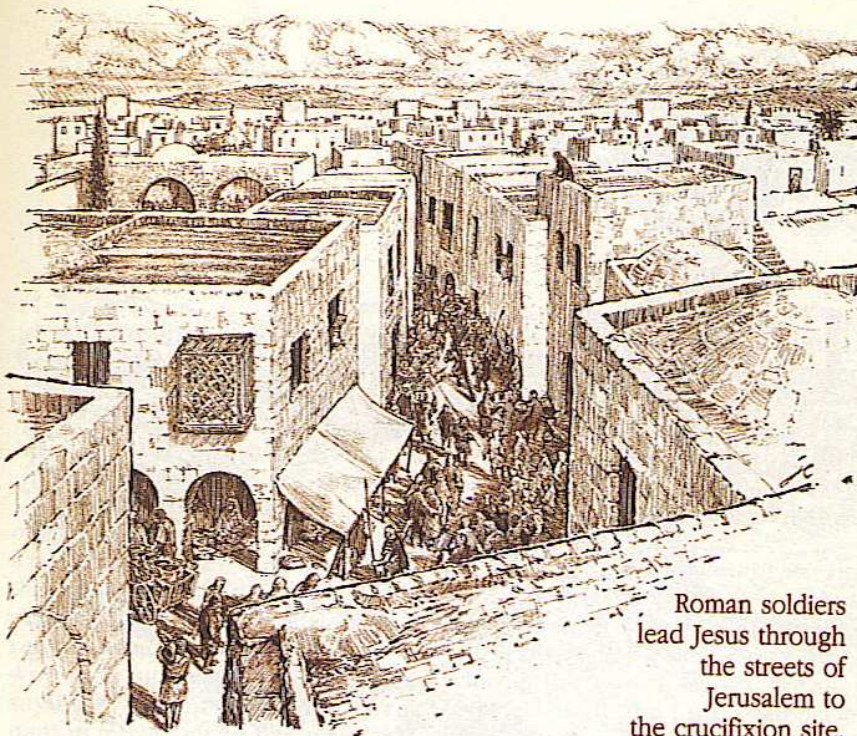
According to Pinnock and Brow, God has been terribly misjudged by many Christians. He is not simply a wrathful Being who demands payment for sins so his justice may be satisfied. "Understood properly," say the authors, "God is practically irresistible."

True enough, humanity's relationship with God has been spoiled by sin. That's why God has been at work to bring us back to him—to redeem us.

Pinnock and Brow emphasize that salvation reconciles and restores relationships. It is not primarily about







Roman soldiers lead Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem to the crucifixion site.

He said God "reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:18). In fact, said Paul, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting

men's sins against them" (verse 19).

In Jesus, God demonstrated his loving plan, which was his purpose from the beginning. Paul told his co-worker Titus that the Christian's

punishment and condemnation.

The authors point to Jesus' story of the prodigal son to make their point. Here, a sinful son who wasted his father's inheritance in riotous living returns home after hitting bottom.

His father doesn't condemn the son but gives him a warm and hearty welcome as any loving parent would. "It is not just that he [the son] is released from charges," Pinnock and Brow point out, "but that he is restored into a loving family."

They stress the family unit rather than the law court as the place where salvation should be seen as taking place. God, they say, should be understood more as a concerned parent than angry judge.

Pinnock and Brow do not deny that we need forgiveness of sin. They accept the legal dimension to salvation, in the sense that wrongs must be righted.

But they point out that pardon is only the first step in a long journey. The real goal of salvation is unrestricted fellowship with God.

Of course, God does experience

anguish and outrage at sin. But how does he ultimately react to it?

God allows its consequences to fall on him personally. He does this by entering and suffering in human history through Jesus.

The point is, say Pinnock and Brow, "God immersed himself in the morass of human history to save us, apart from any response of ours." That means, after Jesus' death we can no longer deny a suffering God's credibility in dealing with our sin and brokenness.

And it is sin that must be dealt with. It has spoiled the relationship between humanity and God, as well as relations between human beings. Sin continues to cause alienation and estrangement.

This is the lesson of the fall of Adam and Eve, who *hid* from God after sinning. The Fall was, literally, a fall from God's grace. It was a turning away from God's offer to live eternally in the presence of his trusting children.

"The Fall was a disruption of family relationships," say Pinnock and Brow.

future rests on the hope of eternal life that God "promised before the beginning of time" (Titus 1:2).

God takes every possible step to reconcile us to him. God is the quintessential pursuing lover. He yearns, as the apostle Peter said, for "everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

And God showed this love while human beings were yet sinners—still his enemies. This proved God was not about rules, or about anger, or about condemnation. He was about love—about bringing us home to himself.

### Suffering God

In Jesus, God entered the world to live with a suffering humanity. Hebrews tells us Jesus as God incarnate shared in our humanity (Hebrews 2:14).

That means God can sympathize with our weaknesses. He has "been here, done that."

God knows what it's like to experience hatred and injustice. In Jesus, he even endured the final torment: extreme torture and death by agonizing crucifixion.

"Persons fell out of loving relationship with God and one another." Thus, reconciliation is necessary.

God acts as a loving parent who desires to heal the broken creatures created by sin. He is not a harsh and wrathful judge eager to condemn.

God loved the world and sent his Son to die for it before it knew its need of him. That means God does not need to be reconciled to man.

"It is in us that the decisive change is needed," say Pinnock and Brow.

"The cross was not a sacrifice without which God could not love or forgive us; it was a sacrifice without which we could not have been able to accept forgiveness."

Jesus did not die so that God would be able to change his attitude toward us. He loved us while we were sinners. Jesus' death, understood as God himself suffering with us, changes our attitude toward him.

In summary, we should see the cross of Jesus—his death for human sin—as the healing of a broken relationship rather than an appeasement of divine anger.





A crowd gathers outside the city walls where Jesus undergoes the standard execution by crucifixion.

The fact that in Jesus God shared our suffering should help to reconcile us to him. Because God reached out to us through a suffering human life, we have no reason to question God's motives, even though we may not fully understand the processes he uses.

God's promise revealed in Jesus is that he will liberate us from the bondage and corruption we now suffer. And it will be a glorious and eternal freedom we shall have. That, as the saying goes, is something we can take to the bank.

In Jesus, God entered our suffering world voluntarily to begin the process of transforming it. Jesus' death closed the gap sin had caused between humanity and God.

### His Life Also

Jesus' death, however, is only half the story of salvation. The rest of the story is his resurrection.

We need a living and a resurrected Savior. We need both the Cross and the Empty Tomb. We need both the death and the life of Christ.

The apostle Paul showed how the

two work together. He wrote, "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (Romans 5:10).

Jesus Christ's death is about our present. It makes peace between us and God.

His resurrection and life is about our future. It is a living promise that there is much more to our lives than our temporary and physical here-and-now existence.

In the beautiful picture the book of Revelation gives us of our eternal future, we are promised eternal life in peace with our Creator. John, the writer, explains this through the image of the new Jerusalem, which symbolizes the eternal kingdom of God.

Speaking of that eternal rest, John quotes a loud voice from God's throne saying: "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He

will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).

The resurrection—the way to this eternal kingdom—is the cornerstone of the Christian life. The resurrection of Jesus is the proof that we, too, shall be lifted up from death to immortal life. □

*No letter about Jesus from Pilate to Emperor Tiberius exists. However, several early church writers claimed that Pilate did, indeed, send a report of the trial and execution of Jesus to Tiberius. (See Tertullian, Apology 16; Justin, Apology 1.35; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.2.) Tertullian claimed that when Emperor Tiberius read the report about Jesus, he asked the Roman senate to declare him a god, but that the proposition was rejected (Apology 26).*



## QUESTIONS

**Q** How often may we take the Lord's Supper?

**A** Looking to the Scriptures as our authority, we see that Paul wrote: "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

There is no hint in Paul's writings

Lord's Supper in the beginning of the Passover season. Some scholars believe that Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal, while others dispute this. In any case, Christians saw the emblems of the Lord's Supper as replacing the older Passover celebration.

Some Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper only once a year, at the Passover season. Others take the emblems of Jesus Christ's death during the Easter season, but may also celebrate the Lord's Supper at other times.

Jesus did not insist that his disciples celebrate the Lord's Supper at any particular time. He only taught that when we celebrate it, we do so in memory of him (Luke 22:19).

The evidence from 1 Corinthians

to the spirit of the Lord's Supper. He called on the church members to repent and work for the loving unity of the faith.

The apostle Paul's approach remains valid today. More important than when we celebrate the Lord's Supper is the spirit in which we observe it.

Each year as the Passover season approaches, the Worldwide Church of God examines itself by reflecting on Jesus' and Paul's words. We want to approach our annual Lord's Supper with the full significance that Christ gave it.

**Q** What does the word *Eucharist* mean?

**A** *Eucharist* is sometimes used synonymously for the Lord's Supper. Though it does not appear in this sense in the Bible, it became the preferred title for the Communion celebration beginning in the second century A.D.

The term came from the Greek word *eucharistia*, meaning "thanksgiving."

As giving thanks is an important part of the Lord's Supper, the term *Eucharist* is certainly appropriate.

Gradually the theology and practices associated with *Eucharist* took on forms that Protestants later found objectionable. Today, because *Eucharist* is frequently associated with Catholic and Orthodox perspectives, most Protestants prefer the terms *Lord's Supper* or *Communion*. Whatever perspective we have, we should commemorate our Lord's suffering and death with thanksgiving. □



Italian ivory carving of Jesus' Last Supper (c. 1100). The fish on the table became a common symbol for Jesus in early Christian art.

of how often Christians must celebrate the Lord's Supper, or that it must be celebrated on a specific day of the year.

Looking to the Gospels, we see that Jesus Christ instituted the

suggests that the Corinthian church celebrated the Lord's Supper frequently (1 Corinthians 11:17, 20, 33-34), when they came together as a church (verse 18). Paul expressed no objections to the timing of their observance, though he did have something to say about how they observed it.

Paul warned the Corinthians that congregational divisions and callous treatment of the poor were contrary



# TEARING DOWN THE WALL

by Scott Nohrenberg



COURTESY SCOTT NOHRENBURG

**S**ERVING in the American military occupation of Berlin in the late 1970s was a deadly serious business. Just blocks away on the other side of the Berlin Wall, occasional bursts of gunfire would jar us from a night's sleep.

Our hearts pounded at the prospect of an alert or invasion from the East. Later, our anxiety would change to sorrow as we learned of another failed escape attempt from the East.

We trained intensely. Though our mission statement was to "close with and destroy the enemy," our hope was that our readiness as a lethal force would deter the enemy, encouraging him to simply bypass the city.

My duties centered around the intelligence and security operations of a world-class combat brigade. Our unit shared the responsibility of overseeing the notorious Wall

Patrol. It became a strange diplomatic game of "in your face" with loaded weapons.

To better know this enemy, I attended various combat intelligence schools throughout Europe. I, in turn, would conduct intelligence classes for our unit. We called it "Ivan training." Frequently we dressed up in mock opposing-force uniforms and "attacked" NATO forces in field exercises.

Ten years later, I was a civilian in Czechoslovakia with my wife, Nancy, celebrating our faith in Christ as our church assembled during the annual Festival of Tabernacles. Mikhail Gorbachev, Pope John Paul II and others were already planning the peaceful disassembly of communism, and the borders were throbbing with activity.

Soon after, we watched with joy and disbelief as the fall of the Berlin Wall acted as a domino throughout Eastern Europe. My worldview was given a jolt.

## Meeting Ivan

Last summer, I traveled to Ukraine with a small group of Ambassador University students. Our main goals were to teach conversational English, business start-ups and computer skills.

We were also to nurture a growing relationship with a group of believers who had surfaced with others as religious persecution subsided. It was there that I finally met Ivan face-to-face.

His name is Ivan Maxim, and he had served in the Soviet Army in East Berlin when I was across the wall in the West.

We were mortal enemies at the time, but now we traded war stories over tea. Ivan's most intense battle now is the one he fights on behalf of younger members of a Baptist church. Ivan is their youth minister.

After Ivan's day job as an engineer, he finds ways to offer hope to Ukrainian teens, a hope centered on the Word of God. They often gather at his house and rap about their struggles in life.

Our groups joined forces on several occasions to worship, fellowship and proclaim our mutual faith

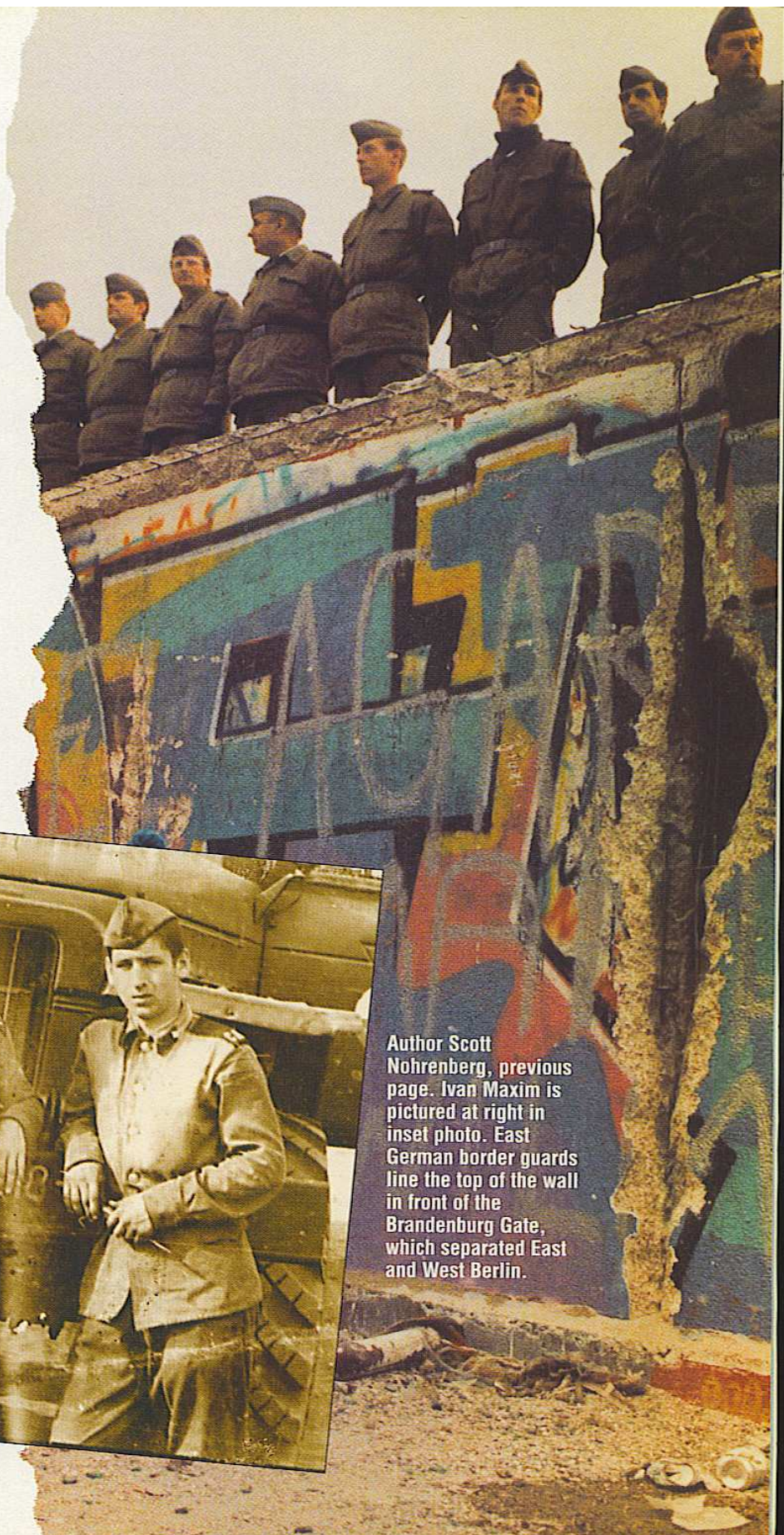


in Christ. One notable activity was a musical program we put on for children who were victims of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, a group in certain need of hope.

All three groups functioned well together in spiritual harmony, focusing on Christ rather than our doctrinal differences. My wall was beginning to fall. This pleasant experience awakened me to a need for stronger faith in Christ's sure words, "For whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40).

Ivan and I still wear slightly different uniforms, but we are allies in Christ, who gave the ultimate sacrifice that we might have eternal life. We recognize him as our supreme leader in our warfare, which is spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:4). Ivan is no longer an enemy. He is a comrade in arms. □

*Scott Nohrenberg and his wife, Nancy, live in Big Sandy, Texas, where they own and operate a MIS consulting firm. One of Ivan's Baptist youth members is staying with the Nohrenbergs while attending an American high school this year.*



Author Scott Nohrenberg, previous page. Ivan Maxim is pictured at right in inset photo. East German border guards line the top of the wall in front of the Brandenburg Gate, which separated East and West Berlin.



COURTESY SCOTT NOHRENBURG; BACKGROUND PHOTO: REUTERS/BETTMANN



# "Other" Christians

by Norman L. Shoaf

**T**HE TWO MEN who knocked on the front door of my friend's house wanted to witness to her.

She assured them that she enjoyed a full and satisfying relationship with God. She had repented of her sins, accepted Jesus Christ as Lord, and committed her life to him. She was happy with her present church affiliation and saw no need to look elsewhere.

That wasn't good enough, they told her. They grew upset because she couldn't see that God worked only through one special group—theirs. They insisted that no one could be a true Christian except in their organization.

"Who are you," she finally asked them, "to tell Jesus Christ where he can or cannot work?"

This question, at last, silenced them. They could argue no further. They had witnessed, but had not won a new convert.

My friend is already converted. She is already a Christian. Christians, according to the Bible, claim allegiance to Jesus Christ. They believe in and on him. They accept him as their personal Savior. They worship him as Lord and King.

Why, then, are different groups of Christians sometimes so hostile toward each other? Why are some unwilling to even consider the existence of "other Christians"?

## One Body? Yes, But...

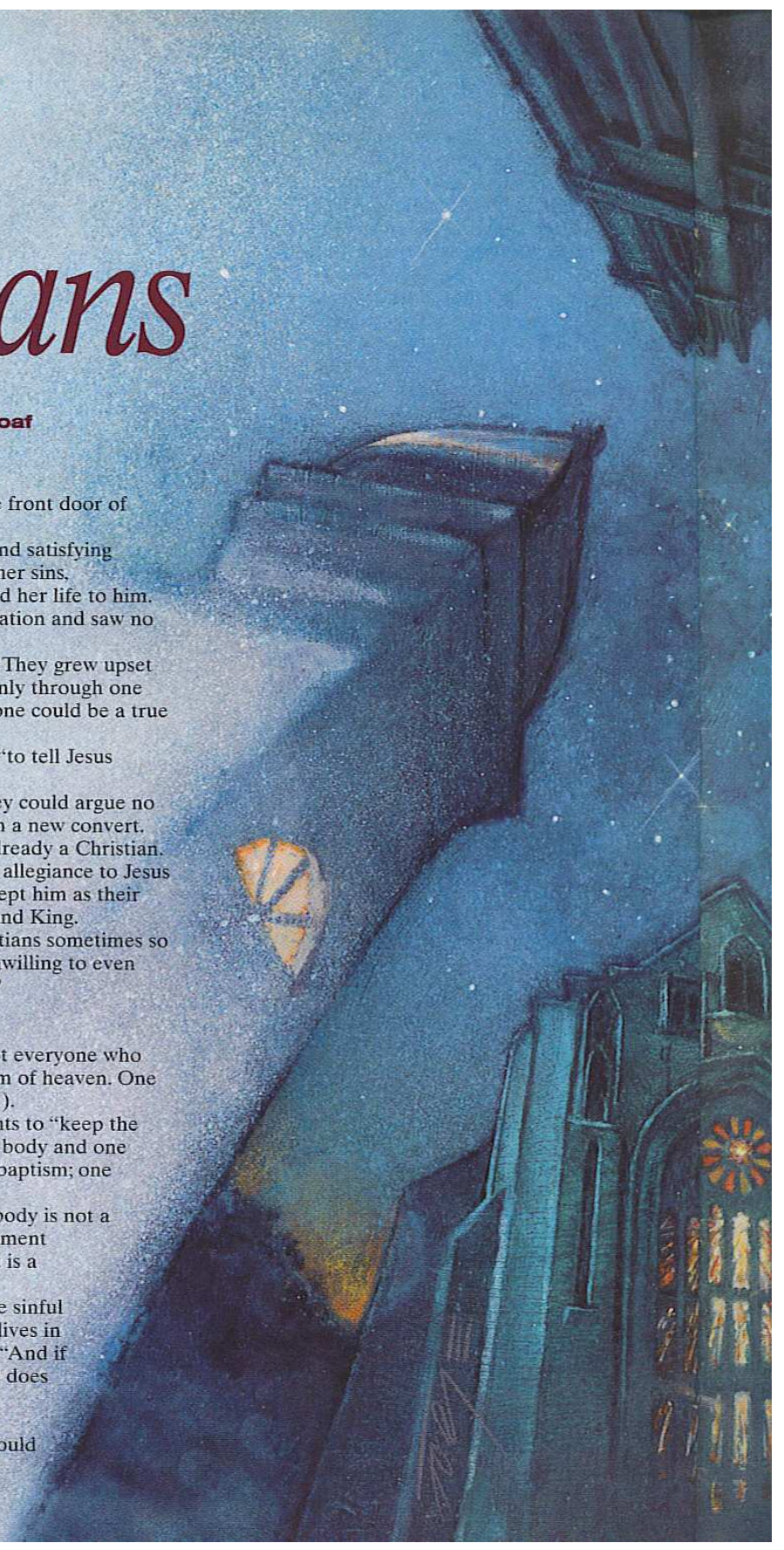
To be sure, Jesus himself flatly stated that not everyone who calls him "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven. One must do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21).

And Ephesians 4:3-6 urges God's servants to "keep the unity of the Spirit," noting that there is "one body and one Spirit...one hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all."

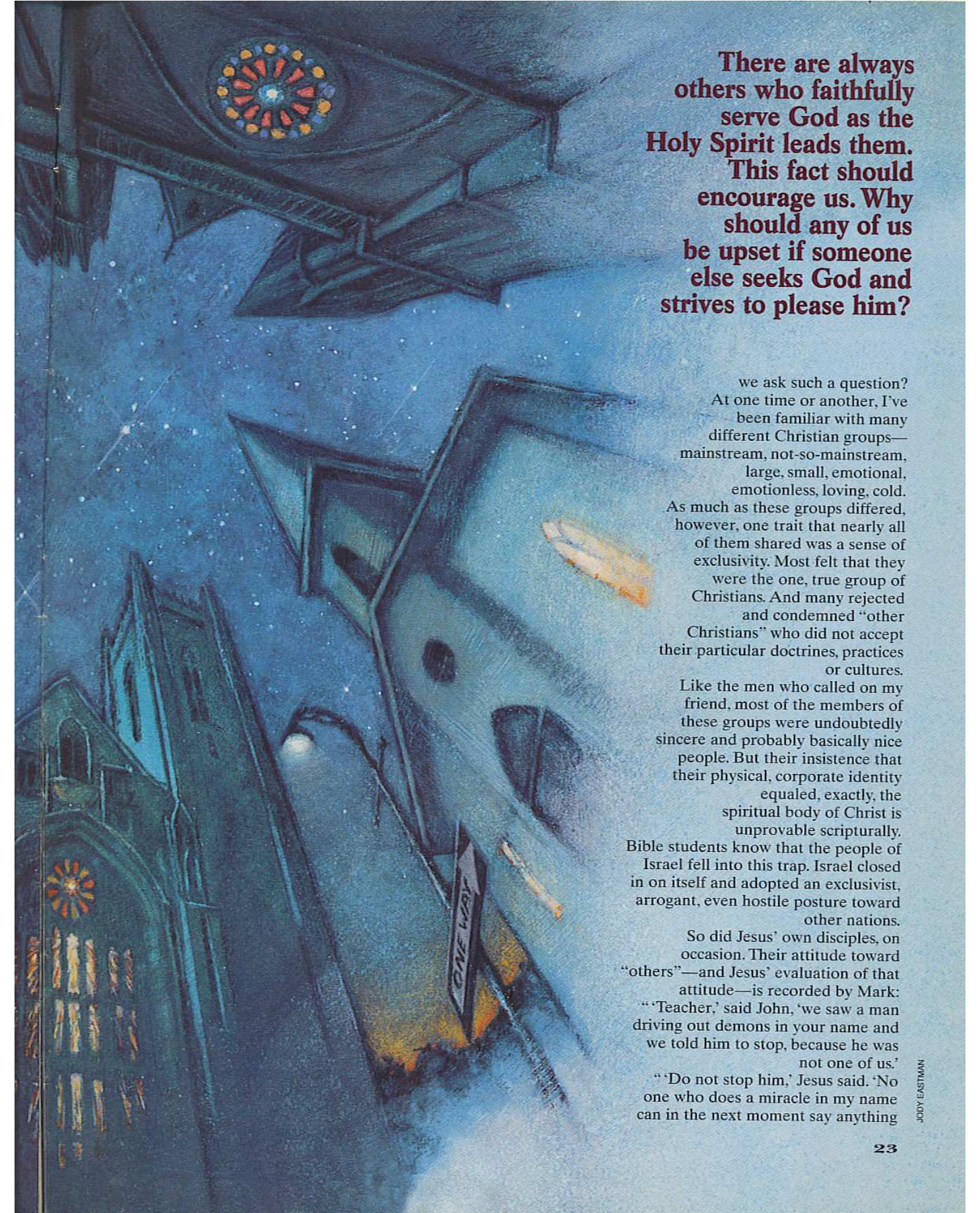
There is only "one body." But that one body is not a physical body or corporation. The New Testament witness is consistent: The true church of God is a *spiritual* community of believers.

"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you," the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans. "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9).

How, then, can you tell who is truly representing Christ, and who is not? Or...should







**There are always others who faithfully serve God as the Holy Spirit leads them. This fact should encourage us. Why should any of us be upset if someone else seeks God and strives to please him?**

we ask such a question? At one time or another, I've been familiar with many different Christian groups—mainstream, not-so-mainstream, large, small, emotional, emotionless, loving, cold. As much as these groups differed, however, one trait that nearly all of them shared was a sense of exclusivity. Most felt that they were the one, true group of Christians. And many rejected and condemned "other Christians" who did not accept their particular doctrines, practices or cultures. Like the men who called on my friend, most of the members of these groups were undoubtedly sincere and probably basically nice people. But their insistence that their physical, corporate identity equaled, exactly, the spiritual body of Christ is unprovable scripturally. Bible students know that the people of Israel fell into this trap. Israel closed in on itself and adopted an exclusivist, arrogant, even hostile posture toward other nations.

So did Jesus' own disciples, on occasion. Their attitude toward "others"—and Jesus' evaluation of that attitude—is recorded by Mark: "'Teacher,' said John, 'we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.'

"'Do not stop him,' Jesus said. 'No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything

JODY EASTMAN



bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward" (Mark 9:38-41).

How to view "other Christians"? In short, leave them alone! It's not for any of us as humans to tell Jesus Christ where he can or cannot work.

One of the earliest and most rancorous controversies in the New Testament church arose when God began to call gentiles into the body of Christ. God shattered the Jewish members' exclusivist notions by demonstrating that he was working with the whole world, not just the Jews.

The apostle Peter finally realized that God does not show favoritism but accepts all men and women who fear him and do what is right. The prophets testify that everyone who believes in Christ receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Jesus said, speaking of non-Israelites: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

Later, Paul wrote: "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4).

"Other Christians," whoever they may be, are the servants of Christ, too. Christ takes responsibility for them. They must answer to him.

### **"But They Can't All Be Right!"**

True. Nor can any one group or person be totally perfect, either. Some "others" even preach insincerely, for personal gain or other selfish reasons.

Paul, in prison, confronted just such a situation. Some had begun to preach Christ "out of envy and rivalry" (Philippians 1:15), perhaps to gain personal followings. But notice the position Paul took:

"The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice" (verses 17-18).

Paul rejoiced that Christ was preached, without regard to the motives of the preachers. This was not an exclusivist Christian who warred over self-proclaimed turf or who worried whether "others" might, like him, have favor in God's eyes.

It's natural for us to want to restrict God's notice and blessing to ourselves. "Good fences make good neighbors," as the fencebuilder proclaimed in Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall" (*North of Boston*, 1914). But Jesus is not inhibited by the limits of our physical fences. Christ envelops the whole world in his love and mercy.

And it is that godly love and mercy, more than any specific doctrine or practice or culture, that mark true Christians.

Are you like me? My own tendency toward

exclusivism gets punctured every time I see "others," through selfless service, equal or excel my own efforts at glorifying God.

What business do I have claiming exclusive connection with God when the Bible tells me God is pleased by those who lay down their lives in love—and displeased by those who self-righteously look down on others who serve him? The true neighbor, after all, was the "good Samaritan" who had mercy on the robbery victim. That is the standard Jesus set for us.

The question is not: "Where is the true church?" The question is: "Where is the true God?" We all need to find that God and worship him with our entire being.

Even the mighty Old Testament prophet Elijah made the mistake of believing that he stood alone in serving God. Fleeing from Jezebel's death threat, Elijah assumed that he was the only one left in Israel who did what God wanted.

God patiently explained to Elijah, "I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18).

Whether Elijah was aware of it or not, God was working through many others in addition to him. This knowledge should have encouraged Elijah. Others worshiped God, too!

### **The Truth About "Others"**

There are always others, in addition to us, who faithfully serve God as the Holy Spirit leads them. This fact should encourage us. Why should any of us be upset if someone else seeks God and strives to please him?

What makes Christians different? In the parable of the good Samaritan, two passed the robbery victim and did not help. Only later did a Samaritan stop to help.

Those who truly are "doers of the word" are few in number in any organization. They are like the few grains of salt that season food, and that's one of the metaphors Jesus Christ used for his disciples.

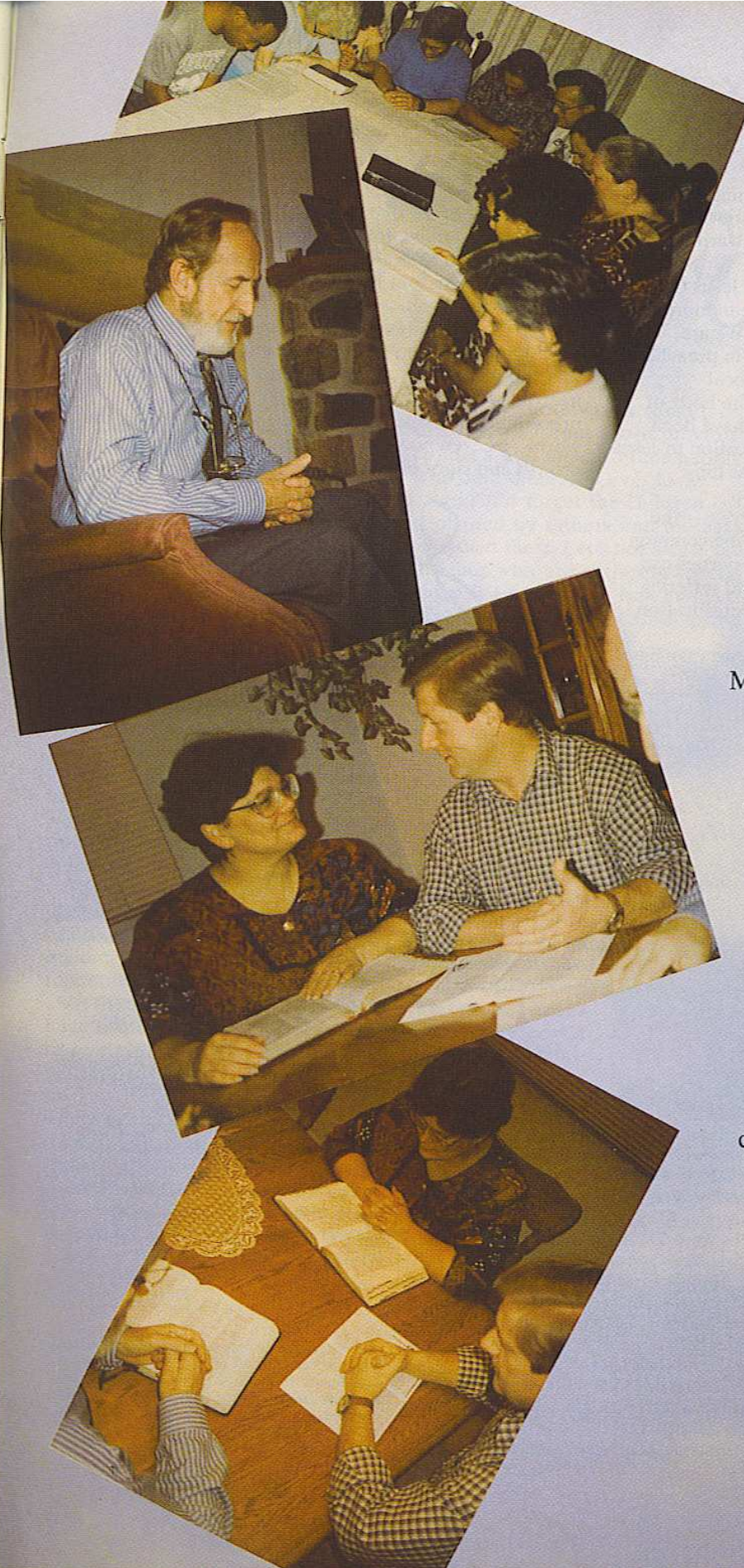
Only those who allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit belong to Christ. That means Christians are called to live, not according to the old, sinful nature, but the way Christ himself lived.

No human owns God, nor is God the property of any corporate entity or church. As Stephen said, "The Most High does not live in houses made by men" (Acts 7:48). Those were among the last words he preached before being stoned to death by some who didn't want to see the riches of God's grace given to others!

How does the old hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers!" go? "We are not divided, all one body we; one in hope and doctrine; one in charity." Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

The fact is that there are no "other Christians"! There is only one kind—those in whom Jesus Christ dwells, those who love God with all their hearts and who love their neighbors as themselves, those who gladly submit to the Lordship of the one God who is sovereign and supreme over all. □





# A Bond OF Prayer

Throughout the cold Canadian winter, there's warmth around the hearth of Kevin Armstrong's home. As pastor of a church in Montreal, Quebec, Kevin is host to bimonthly prayer meetings. Members and friends gather around the kitchen table or in the living room to spend time in joyful prayers of thanksgiving to God. They pray for each other, for their families, their church and their community. With each prayer, a strong bond of fellowship is nurtured as brothers and sisters in Christ draw closer to each other and to their God. If you are interested in joining a prayer group—give us a call. We'd like you to share in this special Christian relationship. Get involved. Go to church.

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number 1-800-309-4466.



## PERSONAL

*Continued from page 1*

Paul: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

We have set our minds and hearts on Jesus Christ and trust explicitly in him. I have never been more thrilled about the state of our fellowship! We are pooling our energies and moving forward in preaching the gospel worldwide and equipping our local congregations to be healthy examples of the body of Christ. We are using the spiritual gifts we have been given and capitalizing on the intense dedication to Jesus Christ—now rightly channeled—which has long characterized our church.

So we stand today at the foot of the cross—the ultimate symbol of all reconciliation. It is the common ground on which estranged and alienated parties can meet. As Christians, we all identify with the suffering that took place there, and we hope that identification will bring us together.

We desire to meet there with anyone we may have

injured. It is only by the blood of the Lamb and the power of the Spirit that we can put the hurts of the past behind us and move forward toward our common goal. I have expressed these sentiments in sermons and letters in recent months, but I wanted to restate them for our *Plain Truth* readers.

So to all members, former members, co-workers and others—all who have been casualties of our past sins and mistakes of doctrine—I extend my sincerest heartfelt apologies. And I invite you to join us in proclaiming the true gospel of Jesus Christ around the world—as even now God is blessing us with renewed growth and vigor in his service.



Joseph Tkach  
President

## LETTERS

*Continued from page 3*

most important of all quests—to know God."

With every passing day, since God has begun to help us know him better through the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, I learn more about the magnitude of his grace and salvation.

Gloria Elam  
Springtown, Texas

### Letter Changed Attitude

I want to thank Louis Lloyd, who wrote to you [November "Letters"] expressing his gratitude for your publication, and his conviction that at age 86, "I'm sure the Lord has something for me to do yet that will benefit one or more of his children."

Mr. Lloyd, I want to thank you for your moving testimony and tell you that your letter has already benefited one of the Lord's children—me.

After reading your letter, I examined myself and was ashamed of my attitude and life-style. I was once a helpless, innocent victim. But I chose to become a willing martyr because I believed the Lord owed me something.

Now I know that the gift of my life

alone requires that I give something back without the expectation of getting anything from this world.

I thought I had nothing and was owed everything. Now I know that the Lord gives us the world when we serve him and his children. Maybe he has something for me to do, too, that will benefit our world. And me, too.

Ronda Miller  
Irvine, California

### Greater Understanding

Just in time! That was exactly my sentiment when I first received *The Plain Truth*.

At age 15, I was then a new Christian yearning to know more about God and His Word. *The Plain Truth* met this need in a unique and special way.

Through these years, the universal Christian values and God-centered emphasis that *The Plain Truth* advocates have been essential in helping me grow in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Till this day, I know not the person who sent in a subscription to the magazine on my behalf.

But one thing I know for sure: *The*

*Plain Truth* with its wide scope of issues and articles will continue to be an important element in my life.

Thank you for your dedicated efforts!

Laurel Lee Felicia  
Bishan, Singapore

I received a copy of the September/October issue and immediately opened to the article written by Greg Albrecht, "Christ, Our Atonement."

I have read this story in the Bible many times, yet my heart has been opened to a higher level of understanding.

To think that the initial sinner Jesus sacrificed for was Barabbas, a murderer. And so am I.

Most will never know truly what this means to the few who are in my shoes—this sacrifice, this grace that even I can receive.

A.M., Arizona State Prison  
Florence, Arizona

*The Plain Truth* welcomes your comments. Letters for this column should be addressed to "Letters to the Editor." The editor reserves the right to use or not use comments so addressed, in whole or in part, as deemed in the public interest, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity or space.

**The Plain Truth**



## COMMENTARY

# We Will Never Forget

**I**T'S BEEN A YEAR since the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma—a year of heartrending, soul-searching reflection on how such a tragedy could happen in our nation.

In mid-June, two months after the bombing, my husband and I visited old downtown Oklahoma City where the federal building once stood. We were greeted by the steady beat of jackhammers as we neared the bomb site.

Tons of broken glass, concrete and steel had already been removed, and some of the collapsed buildings were gone. But others were still there, propped up by two-by-fours, shredded awnings hanging crazily, windows just empty holes.

The powerful explosion actually blasted through the windows of the buildings surrounding the federal building, damaging structures three, four and five blocks away.

At the site of the federal building, huge cranes squeaked and squealed in complaint as they lifted giant bucketloads of broken-up concrete into waiting trucks. In front of where the building used to stand remained a flagpole with the U.S. flag fluttering softly at half-staff.

But the real story was told on the 6-foot-high chain-link fence surrounding the site. Teddy bears, dolls, children's photos, flags, T-shirts, caps, colorful pins and scarves, poems, scraps of paper with children's handwriting and flowers hung there in loving memorial to those killed.

Over and over again I saw the words, "We will never forget."

From a year's vantage point, I say,

let's make those words come true. Let's never forget those precious children and all the other people who died there, 168 lives lost.

Let's not forget the children left orphaned by fathers and mothers who died there. Let's not forget the families who are suffering special anguish again as this first anniversary reminds them of that spring morning in Oklahoma City when their lives were changed forever.

But the most important thing that we must never forget is the horror that can come from hatred and bigotry in the human heart. As I walked around the rubble and broken glass, and pondered the tokens of love on the fence, I wondered if I could ever hate anyone or anything as much as those who planned and executed such diabolical destruction must have.

What if my sister had been in the federal building that day, or my niece or nephews, or my other relatives who live in Oklahoma? They could have been. They've carried out business in that building before.

How would I feel toward the person or persons who could have murdered my loved ones? Would I have more of a right to bitterly hate

the person who had done me so much harm?

I can't say how I would feel under those circumstances. I don't think anyone could until faced with that kind of grief. But I do know I have no right to hate another person, no matter how evil.

For if I hate another, I am no better than those who murdered the people in Oklahoma City. "All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them" (1 John 3:15, New Revised Standard Version throughout).

Let's not forget Oklahoma City.

Let's determine to guard against anger and hatred and bitterness in our lives.

When someone doesn't agree with us, wrongs us or hurts us, let's, with God's help, do as Christ did and pray for him or her.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44).

Let's never let bigotry and hatred get a hold in our lives. Let's never forget Oklahoma City.

—Sheila Graham



The Plain Truth staff's bouquet of flowers hangs with other tokens of love at the bombing site.

SHEILA GRAHAM — PT





## GEOGRAPHY

### ▶ *Oldest Map of Holy Land*

The oldest known map of Palestine is a large mosaic discovered among the ruins of a Greek Orthodox church at Madaba, south of Amman, Jordan, in 1884.

Parts of the map have suffered considerable damage. Made about A.D. 560, the original map once

depicted the entire Middle East in the time of Emperor Justinian. It was composed of more than two million colorful fitted stone cubes. Place-names are given in Greek.

The most important part of the mosaic is a city plan of Jerusalem. A large colonnaded street called the *Cardo* runs through the center of the city. Also visible are main buildings such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Hagia Sion Church and the Coenaculum (upper room).

## LANGUAGE

### ▶ *It's Greek to Me!*

The New Testament was written in koine Greek, a variant of classical Greek spoken by nearly everyone in the Roman Empire in the first century A.D. Many of our English words have their roots in Greek words

found in the New Testament.

Ecclesiastical (having to do with the church) derives from *ekklesia* ("church"). Theology comes from *theos* ("God") and *logos* ("word" or "study"). Metropolis (a large, important city) derives from *meter* ("mother") and *polis* ("city").

*Baptizo* is baptize. *Proselutos* is proselyte.

## SOCIETY

### ▶ *One Pagan's Story*

The early Christian writer Justin Martyr was born in Flavia Neapolis (now called Nablus) in Samaria of Greek parents around A.D. 100, about the time of the apostle John's death. As a young man, he went to Ephesus to study Stoic, Platonic and other pagan philosophies.

While meditating alone

by the seashore one day, Justin met an old man—a Christian—who pointed out to him the weaknesses of the pagan philosophies, and told him about "an older and truer philosophy"—the teachings of the Hebrew prophets who foretold the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Justin listened with keen interest. The conversation led to his conversion (A.D. 132).

Justin moved to Rome, where he boldly defended and aggressively promulgated his newfound religious faith, bringing

## ARCHAEOLOGY

### ▶ *The Upper Room*

Where was the "upper room" of the Gospels, the guest chamber where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper (Mark 14:13-15)?

A building in the southwestern corner of Mt.

Zion has long been venerated as occupying the site where the house with the upper room stood. "All of the arrows of scholarly research point to this holy place," notes Richard Mackowski, an authority on first-century Jerusalem.

The room of the Last Supper is called the Cenacle or Coenaculum (Latin for "dining hall"). The Crusaders (11th-12th centuries) restored the original structure, which had long lain in ruins on Mt. Zion, building the present Gothic-style room with its beautiful vaulting arches. They used as much as possible the original building materials.

The appearance of the original upper room in the first century is difficult to reconstruct. It was probably a simple dining hall,

*Pater* is father.

*Anthropos* ("man") yields anthropology (the study of human beings). *Energeo* ("to work") yields energy. *Dunamis* ("power") yields dynamic, dynamite and dynamo. *Zoe* ("life") yields zoo. *Grapho* ("to write") yields graph and graphic. *Philanthropia* ("love for mankind") yields philanthropy.



**"Perhaps the larger reason why we do not experience more of God's grace is our misconception that, having been saved by grace, we must now, at least to some degree, 'pay our own way' and earn God's blessings in our daily lives."**

—Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace: Living Confidently in God's Unfailing Love*

many to the knowledge of Christ. He wrote two *Apologies*—addressed to the Roman emperors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius—to combat misunderstandings about Christianity.

He also wrote the *Dialogue With Trypho*, a record of his debate with a learned Jew over the messiahship of Jesus.

Justin argued that a new covenant has superseded the old covenant with Israel, and that the Hebrew Scriptures speak of Christ, in whom the law is set

aside. Justin was eventually denounced by the state as a subversive and was condemned to a martyr's death by beheading in 165.

The story of Justin's conversion, derived from his own writings, illustrates the important role of personal evangelism—the spreading of the faith by individual Christians.

The conversion of this learned man of God began with an old man in Ephesus who was not reluctant to share his faith with an interested stranger.

furnished with carpets and couches for guests to recline on while eating.

Longstanding tradition points to this same room as the place where, seven weeks after the Last Supper, the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled disciples on Pentecost (Acts 2). The reputed tomb of King

David is found on the ground floor of the same building (though 1 Kings 2:10 places David's burial on the southernmost hill of Jerusalem, called the City of David).

**Interior view of the room commemorating Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples.**



JANIE TAYLOR—SONIA HALLIDAY PHOTOGRAPHS

## BOOK REVIEW

### ► *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*

James C. VanderKam, professor of Hebrew Scriptures at the University of Notre Dame, is a member of the international team charged with editing and translating the unpublished Dead Sea Scrolls. His book, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Eerdmans, 1994), provides a broadbased understanding of these most important archaeological discoveries.

VanderKam clearly summarizes the complicated story of the Dead Sea Scrolls in readable language. The book is suitable for anyone desiring an overall grasp of the scrolls' significance.

VanderKam's book is also a good antidote to the sensational books with dubious ideas written about the scrolls. The reader can be assured that *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* will provide a reliable and authoritative guide to these important documents.

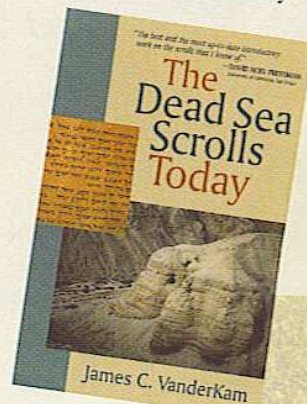
Christians will especially be interested in the sections that discuss the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls to both the Old and New Testaments.

For example, before the scrolls were discovered, the earliest copy of the traditional text of the Bible,

the Masoretic, was the Cairo Codex of the Prophets from A.D. 895.

With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as the Isaiah Scroll, we now have a copy of Isaiah in the original Hebrew that is a thousand years older than the Masoretic version.

The two versions of Isaiah are nearly identical except for small details that rarely affect the meaning of the text. This shows how carefully



Jewish scribes transmitted the text across the centuries. Such examples show why the scrolls are among the most important archaeological finds of modern times.

For readers who are interested in having a good general background to the Dead Sea Scrolls, VanderKam's book is a must. In the words of scholar David Noel Freedman, it is "the best and most up-to-date introductory work on the scrolls that I know of."

—Paul Kroll



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