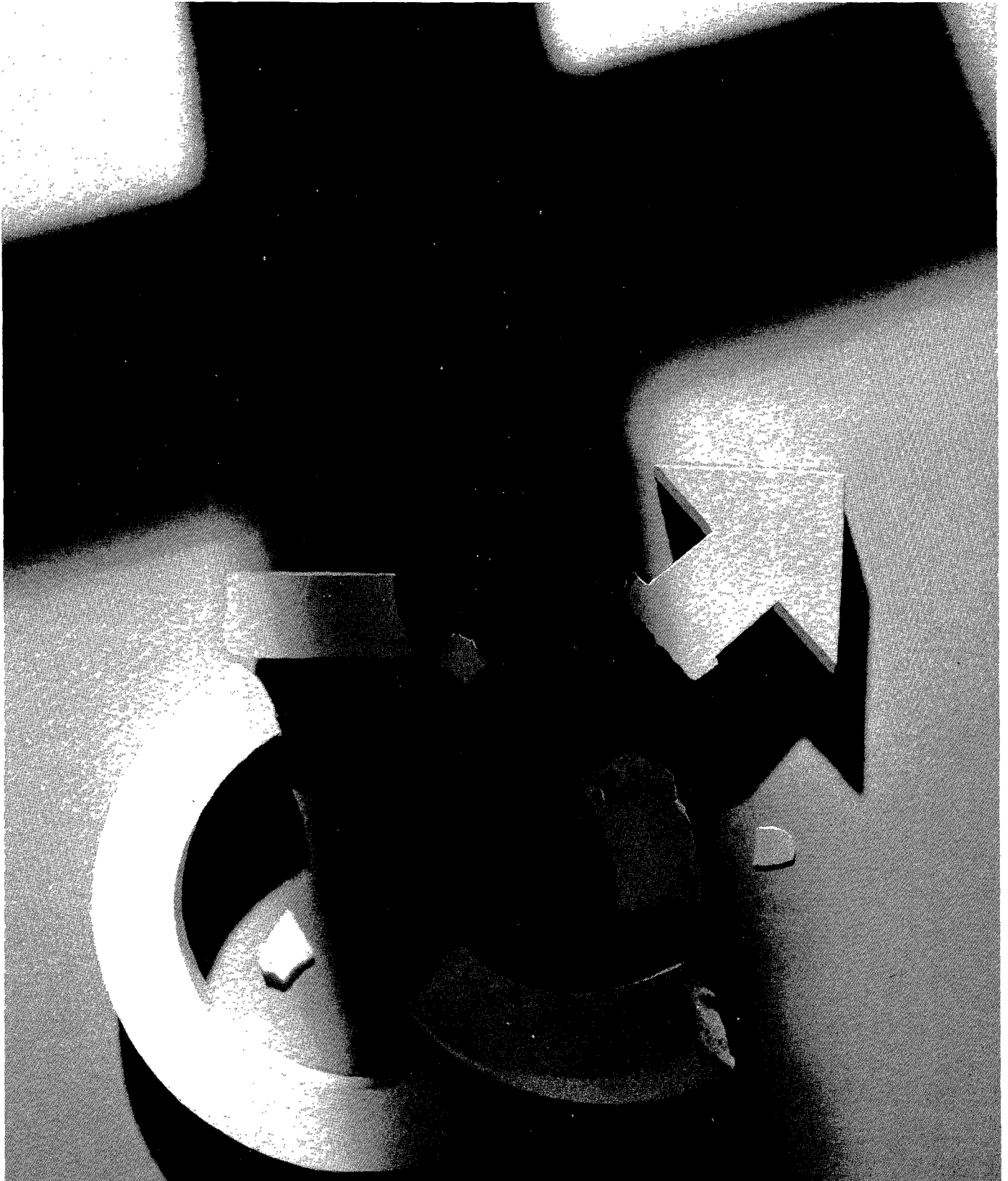


# Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/September 1981



*Homosexual Healing*

Article decrying fiscal irresponsibility on the part of clergy ought also to have chided congregations for the same attitude, says a reader. Others comment on inspiration, baptism, and television.

## Congregational ethics

John Todorovich rightly points out ("What's in It for Me?" May, 1981) that "unbecoming conduct" cheapens ministry and may even compromise it beyond pastoral effectiveness. However, it seems to me that he makes two fundamental mistakes about the genesis and implementation of the attitude "What's in it for me?" as it applies to the parish ministry.

First, he assumes that respect, deference, and trust are attitudes that translate into the kind of congregational compensation that approximates a minister's "high calling." The sad truth is that most congregations fail to compensate their clergy at anywhere near the level they "esteem" them. Many ministers are compensated (including fringe benefits) at or near Federal poverty levels. Often this is the result of the congregation or denominational attitude of "What's in it for me?" Todorovich decries fiscal irresponsibility on the part of the clergy, but neglects to chide congregations for the same irresponsibility.

Second, it is one thing to identify and condemn malpractice; it is another thing to provide solutions. Todorovich does not, in fourteen points, provide a positive fiscal position from which to consider ministerial compensation. When there is discontinuity between the Biblical model of ministerial compensation and the very real facts of financial life in the parsonage, problems arise that lead to situations in which ministerial morals and ethics may be transgressed. This does not excuse those clergy who live with a "What's in it for me?" life style. But it provides an answer to how that life style could develop. If ministerial ethics have been compromised, congregations and denominational officials should examine their ministries to the minister to see whether they are contributors to the cause.—J. Jeffrey Zetto, St. Louis, Missouri.

## Baptism by pouring

Regarding the article in the March, 1981, issue on "Baptism in the Early Church," may I make these two points:

First, no one I know disputes the fact that immersion was the normal mode of baptism in the early church. Even Luther practiced it in the sixteenth century (*Large Catechism*, Part IV, p. 65). But the notion that the early Christians would have

regarded baptism by the mode of pouring as invalid is totally confounded by the passage in the *Didache*, VII, 1-3, dated A.D. 85 to 150, that reads: "If thou hast neither [cold nor warm running water], pour water three times on the head in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." This single passage overturns the conclusions of Rice's otherwise fine article.

Second, it is not the mode but the meaning of Christian baptism we dispute with Anabaptists, and that on solidly Biblical grounds alone.—J. R. Jacobson, Donalda, Alberta.

We are unable to find that Rice concludes that early Christians would have regarded baptism by pouring as invalid. The reader might infer such from the emphasis that Rice gives to the point that he is demonstrating—the preponderant archeological evidence for baptism by immersion in the early centuries of the church. He does indicate that pouring and infant baptism were variations that were introduced in the early church, and obviously, therefore, there were Christians who approved of these methods. However, the evidence seems to indicate immersion as the prevalent mode. He was not dealing with the manuscript evidence, although, as pointed out, the *Didache* certainly gives evidence of pouring as an alternate method of baptism very early in the church.

It is certainly correct to say that the basic difference between Anabaptists and others is in the meaning of Christian baptism. However, is it not true that the meaning we assign to baptism also inevitably affects our understanding of the mode to a great degree? Historically, it seems to have been those communions that see baptism as an adult response to the claims of the gospel that have held strictly to immersion, while those communions that view baptism as analogous to circumcision in the Old Testament (an initiation into the community of God) have practiced sprinkling and/or pouring in addition to immersion.—Editors.

## Early immersion?

As Eastern Orthodox, I practice baptism by immersion and so was interested in the article by Dr. G. E. Rice, "Baptism in the Early Church" (March, 1981). Unfortunately, Dr. Rice's study lacks a certain scholarly rigor. Certainly "sprinkling" was never practiced at Ravenna (p. 23). Roman Catholics baptize by affusion. More serious is the conclusion that primi-

tive baptism was undoubtedly by immersion. None of the fonts described by Dr. Rice is deep enough for convenient adult immersion, and the latest evidence and oldest archeological witness point to a method whereby the candidate stood in the water under a flowing spout (living water) or had it poured over him. Dr. Rice's ancient illustrations indicate the same usage. To quote another article in the March *MINISTRY*, "A doctrine is not made truth by being long held."—David Page, Eastern Orthodox Church, New Jersey.

## Members of the same team

Three things I have to say: 1. Thank you for an excellent publication. Every issue is superbly done. 2. The ministers' seminars have been so helpful. Content has been on target. 3. It is marvelous to be on the team with such a committed group of Christians. The Spirit of Jesus is moving in the hearts of His people. And now for a request. Please send me the book you offered in the March issue, *Steps to Christ*, by Ellen G. White.—J. Phillip Blake, Normal, Illinois.

Note: The offer of a free copy of the religious classic, *Steps to Christ*, still holds for anyone wishing a copy. For further information, see the "Reader Service Page," page 30.

## More picky than God?

The article on the inspiration of Scripture (March, 1981) is the best statement on the subject that I have read. I had been studying some "problem" texts and came across the discrepancy between the number of people who died in the plague cited in Numbers 25:9. That text says that 24,000 died. But when Paul referred to this in 1 Corinthians 10:8, he said the number was 23,000. For some reason this greatly disturbed me, and I sat flipping my Bible back and forth from one passage to the other, unable to believe my eyes, since I do believe in the inerrancy of the Bible. After quite some time of earnest prayer, asking the Lord, "What does this mean?" He answered, "It means that you are a lot more nit-picky about details than I am." I believe that such "discrepancies" appear in His Word to convey the message that we dare not take any verse out of context and become legalistic about it. I believe that God wants us to remember the 23,000 vs. the 24,000 when we read or teach about

(Continued on page 31.)

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# Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/September 1981/Volume 54/Number 9



COVER:  
SIEGFRIED BOHLMANN

**Homosexual Healing/4.** Churches in almost every denomination are facing the issue of a homosexuality that is increasingly demanding acceptance as a Christian life style. Many voices today are insisting that there is no such thing as genuine deliverance or change from homosexuality and that therefore the church must rethink its opposition to homosexuality as sin. MINISTRY Editor J. R. Spangler talks with Colin Cook, who found deliverance from homosexuality through the power of the gospel and now directs Quest Learning Center, dedicated to homosexual healing. Cook talks candidly about his experience, what homosexuality is, what Jesus Christ can do for the homosexual person, and how pastors can minister to this needy group. While condemning homosexuality as sin, Cook pleads for more compassion and understanding of the sinner.

**Homosexuality: A Biblical Perspective/14.** Raoul Dederen.

**Is the Church Spiritual Israel?/17.** Hans K. LaRondelle. A key distinction of dispensationalist theology is that God has two separate, distinct purposes and programs for Israel and the church, and that the promises to one do not intermesh with the promises to the other. Dr. LaRondelle examines the validity of this distinction in the context of Romans 9-11.

**Quality Control for Sermons/20.** James Coffin shares six simple ways to evaluate your sermons. If followed, this method will ensure that at least the basic qualifications for a good sermon are present.

**Salvation Is a Gift From God/22.** The doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, has long been the position of the Protestant church. In part 3 of the series This We Believe, William G. Johnsson explores the meaning of God's gift of salvation.

**Caesarea Maritima: Herod's City/24.** V. Bailey Gillespie, a member of the excavation team working at Caesarea, reports on some of the interesting finds from this important New Testament city.

**Is There Help for Homosexuals?/27.** J. R. Spangler reflects on the blessings he received from his interview with Colin Cook (see p. 4). While we must stand in staunch opposition to sin, we must at the same time show love and concern for the sinner. There is help for all of us sinners—not just homosexuals. It is found in Jesus Christ and His saving grace.

**File Me Under Miscellaneous/28.** Patricia Maxwell.

**Biblical Archeology/24**  
**From the Editor/27**  
**Shepherdess/28**

**Reader Service Page/30**  
**Shop Talk/31**  
**Recommended Reading/32**



PHOTO BY GLENN DABY

*Can homosexuals find genuine deliverance? Many say No; Colin Cook says Yes. In an interview conducted by Editor J. R. Spangler, Cook talks candidly about his own experience and what Christ can do for homosexuals.*

## Homosexual healing

Can the true homosexual change? A number of experts—including homosexuals themselves—say No. Colin Cook, director of Quest Counseling Center, in Reading, Pennsylvania, and codeveloper of *Homosexuals Anonymous*, says Yes. In a far-ranging interview with *MINISTRY* Editor Robert Spangler, Cook addresses such questions as What should the pastor do when a member of his congregation reveals that he is gay and wants help? What do those “proof texts” have to say about homosexuality? How are we to assess the explanations offered by the gay theologian? What really is the cause of homosexuality, and how may the church most effectively minister to people who want freedom?

The editors of *MINISTRY* believe that even the Christian minister and counselor who is used to working with homosexuals will learn something from the exceptionally candid and knowledgeable insights offered by Cook. While we recognize with Cook that his experience is personal and individual and may not necessar-

ily be normative for all, we endorse the principles stated, realizing their application may vary in each situation. We also believe these principles have an element of universality and may be applied to nonsexual problems.

**Spangler:** Homosexuality is a condition that has come to the forefront nationally as the gay community has become more vocal. What is a beginning point in understanding the homosexual and ministering to him?

**Cook:** It is important to distinguish between homosexuals committed to a gay life style and those desperately trying to resolve what they believe to be an emotional and moral problem. The gay liberationists are the vocal element, the one most featured by the media. But there is also the homosexual privately suffering his problem. He has not shared it with anyone and has a hard time believing there is hope of a normal life for him. He feels con-

demned, lost, and isolated.

**Spangler:** Is the gay Christian who practices homosexuality a significant segment of the homosexual population? And why this sudden phenomenon of homosexual churches?

**Cook:** There is an increasing belief that homosexuality is an acceptable way of Christian living—though my impression is that homosexuals who believe this are a minority. I believe they have emerged as a result of church neglect. Where could they go for help? Most churches could not believe that homosexual people had any spiritual longings and simply condemned them. Finally the explosion came.

I must say that I don't think our own church ministers effectively to homosexuals—or to those with troubled emotions in general. We have many Adventist doctors who minister to the physical man, but almost none who deal with the emotional, and then only in a secular way. Surely the gospel speaks to the whole of man.

**Spangler:** Let me get the kinds of homosexual people in mind. I suppose the largest segment of gay society consists of those who couldn't care less about Christianity. They are practicing homosexuals, and God or religion doesn't enter into the picture for them.

**Cook:** No. I don't think that is the largest group. It is the *loudest* group. I have a feeling that the majority of homosexual people do care deeply about religious questions and try to resolve them in various ways.

**Spangler:** You are speaking of those committed to the homosexual way of life within the framework of Christianity? I have noticed that this group gets considerable support from several authors . . .

**Cook:** Yes. Derrick Sherwin Bailey's book, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, is one of the recent major works that gave impetus to this concept. Since then, John McNeil, a Jesuit (*The Church and the Homosexual*), and John Boswell, of Yale (*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*), have added support to proponents of a gay life style. Both are self-affirmed homosexuals, and many frustrated homosexuals seeking peace and equilibrium have accepted their thinking, as well as many heterosexual individuals who are sympathetic to their life style.

**Spangler:** And that is?

**Cook:** That so long as a homosexual union is responsible, monogamous, and committed, it's OK.

**Spangler:** Are these three books written within the Christian framework?

**Cook:** The last two are written within the Christian gay framework.

**Spangler:** But what about those who are longing for deliverance? Are there many of those?

**Cook:** Yes, I believe so. But you have used a controversial word when you say

"deliverance." Many don't like that word, and many believe it's impossible anyway.

**Spangler:** But you will go on record as believing that many gays want to change? I've been under the impression that many have no desire to change.

**Cook:** Thousands would get out if they knew how. There's a constant stream of requests coming into our center and others like it across the country.

**Spangler:** Would you say there is a similarity between the problem of homosexuality and the problem of, say, alcoholism? I know alcoholics who would do anything to be different, but they feel trapped.

**Cook:** There are similarities. Both problems express a struggle to cope with the world and a desire to escape from reality by the exclusiveness of the respective habits. But the similarity ends when some homosexuals come to accept their problem as a life style and live fairly comfortably with it. If an alcoholic did that, he'd be dead.

**Spangler:** Which kind of homosexual person is most likely to suffer?

**Cook:** The homosexual by orientation who really wants to change but doesn't know how. From the time of puberty he's had desires for the same sex. We shouldn't confuse him with the sailor or prisoner who may have sex with a man because he is deprived of females. The fellow I'm talking about suffers deeply in adolescence. He feels estranged, different. He feels frightened by his sexual urges and wants to change. He is ridden with guilt, and he doesn't have—and doesn't even want—girlfriends, when his peers do. They're all talking about girls, commenting on their shapes and how they'd like to "explore" them. He doesn't feel any of that. And when he recognizes that the captain of the football team appeals to him more than the cheerleader, the fear is unimaginable.

**Spangler:** Do you think this kind of homosexual person is born this way?

**Cook:** No. The theory that homosexuality finds its roots in one's relationship with his parents has the most solid support among psychiatrists (Irving Beiber, Lawrence Hatterer, Lionel Oversey, for example). Within the past ten years, however, there has been a new emphasis in the behavioral sciences on a hypothesis that includes a prenatal, hormonal cause, but it's not so much the findings themselves that are important as the interpreta-

tion given to them. There are predispositions to sin in all of us. It's a question of whether we direct them, and how, that counts.

I believe the ideas of a harsh or distant father and a dominant or binding mother are correct, but as a primary cause they don't go far enough. Since most psychiatrists do not operate within the Christian framework, they fail to see the deeper causes. The parent-child relationship (of which there are about a score of variants) is important, and it must be worked through in the counseling relationship if a homosexual person wants to change, but it is a secondary cause, not a primary one. The primary cause, in my opinion, is the spiritual shame that all mankind experiences as a result of the Fall. The psychic damage from this is immense, and has affected the sexuality of every man and woman.

**Spangler:** Aren't psychiatrists wary of single-cause theories? They see them as oversimplified and reductionistic, don't they?

**Cook:** True, though I sense that there is a fear among them, as among the rest of us, that simple theories might appear unscientific. We do have to guard against the danger of reductionism, as you suggest. It leads to pigeonholing and false solutions. Nevertheless, the Christian has access to a source of knowledge that a psychiatrist operating outside the Biblical framework does not have.

When Adam sinned, one of the first things affected was his sexuality—not his sexual desire, necessarily, but his whole idea of himself as a man. The record is that he felt shame, a certain strangeness about his nakedness, that led him to cover himself. Obviously there was nothing wrong with nakedness, because he was naked before he fell and he felt no shame. But there was guilt there now, you see. There was a shame and fear that led him to some very different perceptions of the world. He began to hide his true self because of his shame. He put God and his wife at a distance, as beings alien to him. Now we have all the root causes, the ingredients, of homosexuality—alienation from God, from self, and from the world. I'm not saying that Adam was homosexual! Please don't quote me as saying that! What I'm saying is that Adam's distorted view of the world—that God was angry, and therefore he felt condemned and anxious;

that self was shamed, and therefore his manhood was now inferior; and that the world was now something to conceal himself from—set the predisposition for homosexuality. Once the secondary causes enter the scene—an alienation of the father, for instance, or domination by the mother, and a manipulation of both by the child—man's distortion of self and the world is worsened to the point of homosexuality.

**Spangler:** We could say, then, that homosexuality is an expression of man's distorted view of the world?

**Cook:** Yes, provided that that is understood in its fuller, spiritual extent. And particularly a distorted view of the world of women. Once Adam fell, his female opposite, Eve, was no longer viewed as his complement but as a threat. He hid his body from her and demeaned her in order to exonerate himself. Adam manipulated Eve by placing blame on her in order to put himself in a better light. We pay a price for that, and the price is diminishing respect.

**Spangler:** That's a very subtle form of contempt in male and female relationships that involves the whole world, not just homosexual people.

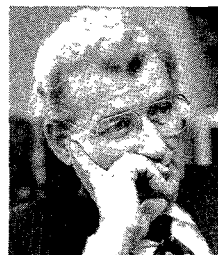
**Cook:** Yes, and once the secondary causes are there, it takes a particular form in homosexuality. We all experience the guilt and isolation of the Fall. Protection against it is often expressed in a mother's close, binding relationship with a child (particularly if the father is emotionally distant or absent) and in the child's subtle manipulation of that relationship. The result, years later, is a diminished respect of the world of women.

I well remember adolescent impressions—unspoken at the time—that women were not as intelligent as men. That they knitted and gossiped and giggled a lot and were weak. That kind of distorted view limits emotional sharing with women and true sexual intimacy, because when we feel insecure in ourselves, we look for strength in our partner and feel put off by weakness. It's the very opposite view of what God said of women: "I will make a helper *suitable* for him" (Gen. 2:18, N.I.V.).\* It's only when the gospel heals our distorted view of God, self, and the world of the opposite sex that the power of manipulation and contempt is broken and we find freedom from homosexuality.

**Spangler:** I am inclined to listen carefully to your convictions, because I

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*It's only when the gospel heals our distorted view of God, self, and the world of the opposite sex that the power of manipulation and contempt is broken and we find freedom from homosexuality.*



J. R. Spangler



Colin Cook

know you speak not only as a counselor to homosexuals but also as one who had a homosexual problem and who found recovery through the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you want to share more evidence from your own experience?

**Cook:** In my experience, the homosexual identity—this distortion of the world—was there from the age of 10 or so and began to break up from the mid-30s. My father was not a distant man emotionally. He was warm and friendly. But he had to be distant physically. He was a commercial fisherman who was away ten days out of every twelve. So for long stretches of time there was no role model in my life through whom I could see myself as a more secure male in the world. And I had polio in my right leg. Any physical defect has the potential of increasing inferiorities in childhood, particularly when there is either absence of involvement or deep tension in the parent-child relationship.

This combination, coupled with my already broken self-image that we all experience as a result of the Fall, led me to distorted perceptions of my sexuality. I was not good enough for girls. Even while I involved myself in the world, I began to isolate my inner self from it, particularly the world of women. I remember feeling that girls would not find me attractive because of my game leg. And as I continued this isolation from them, they lost any intimate appeal they could have had for me. By the time I became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian at 15, my homosexual orientation was fully formed. Unbeknown to myself, I was rejecting my real self, my true identity, and the world God had made for me and was trying to find a substitute in this longing for other men. I was so desperate, even at that time, that I asked my minister for an anointing.

**Spangler:** Do you mean that you were anointed specifically for the homosexual problem?

**Cook:** That's exactly what I told my pastor I needed anointing for. But he didn't seem to know what was going on and thought I was really struggling with masturbation. Anyway, I was anointed, but nothing seemed to change. Yet looking back, I think the Lord did answer my prayer for healing, but twenty years later.

My problem was compounded when I took theology in college and got into perfectionism. Even though the cross was being presented regularly in our courses, I was blinded by perfectionism to its real meaning. I came to believe that I must reach a state of perfect moral obedience to the law of God. And this had to happen before I could have any certainty of final salvation. I wasn't a legalist in the ordinary sense. I believed this perfection could be accomplished only by the Holy Spirit. But theologically speaking, I totally confused the work that God did for me in Jesus Christ with the work that He does in me by the Holy Spirit. You can imagine the

result. I was always looking inward for assurance, as if the Holy Spirit were my Saviour. The cross of Jesus was out of focus. Salvation was never present for very long. It was always precarious and dependent on my internal progress. I could not see my perfection in Jesus. I was what I have since come to call a "religious neurotic."

What I didn't understand then was that my perfectionism was one more distorted view of the world and of God and of self. I think I was a perfectionist not because of the Biblical data that I thought was there but because I needed it psychologically. Guilt was one of the strongest motivators I knew at the time. It seemed only right to condemn myself. And isolation from the real world was my major way of coping with temptation. Perfectionism provided me with ample guilt and ample isolation. One thing became certain to me: perfectionism created so much cryptic guilt and fear that it only worsened my homosexual problem.

**Spangler:** So while you were going through all this, you'd stumble and fall?

**Cook:** Yes, and feel rejected, feel that salvation was so uncertain unless I got through to a sustained perfection.

**Spangler:** And then you felt the Lord would accept you?

**Cook:** Yes, and I would pass through the judgment by virtue of what He had done in me through the Spirit.

**Spangler:** Did you actually serve as a pastor?

**Cook:** In England for four years and in New York for three. But I decided to quit; I just couldn't control the habit. I felt I had



to find a Biblical-faith solution, or I would never have confidence in the Bible again. How could God possibly have overlooked a problem so filled with suffering! I now know that the Scriptures do offer an answer.

**Spangler:** Did you believe that the Bible condemns the homosexual life style?

**Cook:** Oh, yes. That understanding was what constantly motivated me to desire change. But guilt doesn't create change, only the desire for it. That motivation is only destructive in the end if you don't discover the grace of God. The law can only kill, and it had been killing me for twenty years. I mean, what do you do with guilt? Unresolved guilt leads only to despair or to the protectiveness of perfectionism. But the law against homosexuality at least did one thing for me. For twenty years it restrained me from total abandonment, so that when the gospel became clearer to me, I was ready for it. But before that I felt constantly frustrated by God. I saw the Biblical call to the homosexual. I sought to repent and trust. But in the end the homosexual anxiety always overpowered my faith.

**Spangler:** So you are living proof that a homosexual may desperately want to be a Christian and live in harmony with the Biblical ethic of sex?

**Cook:** Yes, but all the while, it appears to the homosexual person that his very nature is opposed to the commands of Scripture. So he is faced with this seeming dilemma: Does he give up his Christian faith and accept himself? Or does he deny his true self—as he thinks of it—in order to live the faith?

But there's something more to say about this, Bob. I was already a Christian, a babe in Christ, struggling with homosexuality. I was converted at 15. I have been an Adventist for a quarter of a century. The atoning work of Jesus has meant very much to me. But in those early days I just couldn't understand how it applied to homosexuality. I was one of those people Paul speaks about who needed their faith "mended," as it says in *The New English Bible* (1 Thess. 3:9).† The Greek word there is "to round out," "to make whole," "to knit together." Ministers need to realize that thousands out there need their faith mended in relation to homosexuality.

**Spangler:** That's quite a challenge to the ministry! Referring to that dilemma you mentioned, it seems, then, that before

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*The presence of the gay Christian in our midst is half a result of neglect by both ministry and laity. The church simply was not there when the homosexual struggler needed guidelines, fellowship, and care.*





*The New Testament is replete with counsel on heterosexual relationships. But nowhere do we find Biblical counsel on homosexual union. Are we to say that God simply ignored the needs of homosexual people?*

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the gospel solution comes to light, a homosexual is faced with a double bind: either try to live the Christian life and deny his supposedly true self, his homosexual self, or accept himself as homosexual and give up being a Christian. That's a terrible conflict. What about the homosexual, though, who resolves his problem by becoming a gay Christian?

**Cook:** He has become a gay Christian because he has not seen the third alternative that would release him from that double bind. It is a false dilemma that he finds himself facing, not a true one, for there is deliverance from homosexuality. Nevertheless, we must treat him with understanding. He has had to struggle in isolation. Was the church there to show him the true alternative? He has had to resolve a conflict with almost no guidance from the Christian community. At least he tried to hold on to his Christian faith, even though it is now compromised. He is in error, I believe. Yet the error is not 100 percent his; 50 percent belongs to the church. The presence of the gay Christian in our midst is half a result of pastoral neglect by both ministry and laity. The church simply was not there, emotionally, when the homosexual struggler needed guidelines, fellowship, and care. It is tragic and very, very sad.

**Spangler:** You say you believe the Bible speaks of homosexuality. But the gay theologian takes the same texts you read and finds no reference to homosexuality in them.

**Cook:** You have to understand that there is a basic presupposition underlying gay theology—that true homosexuality is unchangeable, natural, “inverted,” as Bailey started calling it. So God wouldn't condemn the expression of something that is basic to some people's nature, the gay theologian says. What God does condemn, he explains, is the *abuse* of homosexuality, as in homosexual rape, or the exploitation of it, as in homosexual cultic prostitution.

**Spangler:** So the gay theologian interprets the homosexuality texts on the basis of these presuppositions?

**Cook:** Yes. Sodom and Gomorrah, for example, were not destroyed for homosexuality, the gay theologian explains, but for pride, gluttony, and inhospitality, as Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jesus point out. The Sodomites' desire to “know” these men was not sexual, the gay theologian says,

but for the purpose of demanding to know who these people were who had entered the city without the proper cultural courtesies of introduction to the elders. Other gay theologians accept that homosexuality is referred to, but argue that its abuse in rape, not the condition itself or its proper use, is the thing condemned.

The Leviticus proscription against homosexuality is explained by gay theology to refer to pagan cultic homosexuality, with which the Israelites were to have nothing to do. Boswell sees these same proscriptions as ceremonial and thus no longer applicable in the Christian dispensation.

Gay theologians consider 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:9, 10 to be obscure since, they say, the Greek word *arsenokoites* could refer to numerous things other than homosexuality and since these sin lists lack the necessary context for evaluation.

Finally, the reference in Romans 1 is viewed by the advocates of gay theology as homosexual rape and exploitation, not true “inverted” homosexuality. These people condemned by Paul were not homosexuals by nature, says the gay theologian, because they exchanged a relationship with the opposite sex for one with the same sex. Thus they were “perverts,” not “inverts,” it is argued.

**Spangler:** So the gay theologian is saying that these men and women were first straight, then turned to homosexual acts, and thus became “perverted”?

**Cook:** Yes, that's what he's saying.

**Spangler:** So an oriented pervert who continued his life style would . . .

**Cook:** Not “pervert,” but “invert.” He has always been like that, therefore it's natural to him, says gay theology, and not evil as long as it's used responsibly.

**Spangler:** What do you think of this gay theology interpretation?

**Cook:** Well, in the first place, it's important to point out that many sanctimonious heterosexuals have thumped away at these texts as if there were no sin in the world as bad as homosexuality. If condemnation against sin is preached without the admixture of hope and the gospel, a preacher's work is nothing more than a “ministration of death,” to use Paul's term (see 2 Cor. 3:7). These texts have definitely been overdone, there's no doubt about that.

**Spangler:** It seems, then, that there

really was much more to Sodom's problem than homosexuality.

**Cook:** Yes, even though homosexuality is clearly, in my opinion, included in the text. Homosexuality was merely a symptom of the deeper problem of self-indulgence in Sodom. Nor should we pour contempt on the gay theology view that the sin for which Sodom was destroyed was inhospitality. Although it is not a totally satisfactory explanation of the text, inhospitality was considered a grave offense among the Israelites, as shown both by Biblical and extra-Biblical sources. It is poignant that homosexuals, who have suffered such inhospitality and ostracism at the hands of heterosexuals, should be the ones to point this out to us.

**Spangler:** Do you think that if these texts had been explained more objectively in the past, the homosexual might have been more willing to seek help without fear of condemnation?

**Cook:** Yes, and the heterosexual would have been better equipped to give such help because he'd be more inclined to see homosexual sin as one among many—his own included.

So then, I think the texts have been overdone. But still, the gay theology interpretation is strained and implausible. When I hear somebody interpreting passages in this way, I can hear myself thinking, Is he really serious? How can a person understand passages of Scripture on the basis of linguistics only, while ignoring the wider theological questions of the Biblical framework of sexuality? When we look at that picture, we see a unified framework of heterosexuality. God made man in His image, male and female, the Bible says. Genesis sets up man's identity. Man was made to be fully himself only when he identifies with one who is the same as he is, and yet opposite from him—that is, another human of the opposite sex (see Gen. 2:10-24). There's a mysterious drawing power between man and woman as sameness and opposite. And Genesis presents this as the *inner structure* of man's sexuality, deposited in him at Creation. If you take note of the unusual wording of Genesis 1:26, 27—it departs from the earlier wording of expressing how God created things—you get a strong sense of the writer's attempt to parallel the male-female union with the unity and diversity found in the Godhead. The union we have in love and marriage with

another who is like us, yet opposite expresses something of the truth and beauty in the Godhead, it seems.

Then, when we come to the New Testament, Jesus confirms man's heterosexual creation: God "made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4). And so does Paul. Throughout Scripture heterosexual families are the norm of reality. The New Testament is replete with counsel on heterosexual relationships in love and marriage. But nowhere do we find Biblical counsel on homosexual union. Are we to say that God simply ignored the needs of homosexual people? That would be an intolerable thought that would make God out to be heartless. Far better to understand that homosexual people deep down are the same as the rest of us—heterosexual people, but with a homosexual struggle. Then God in mercy speaks the same to them as to everyone else: "Know your true identity in My Son. Know My power to deliver you. Know My love for you." This is not to say, of course, that homosexual deliverance must necessarily include marriage. Freedom from homosexuality may involve either a single or a married life.

**Spangler:** So the homosexuality texts should be interpreted in the context of this wider, Biblical framework of heterosexual-ity.

**Cook:** Yes, not to do so is another form of proof-texting, no matter how sophisticated the linguistic and exegetical technique. If proof-texting can't be used to condemn homosexuality, neither can it be used to condone it. We have to look at the wider perspective. We have to discover the underlying structure. And when we do, we just can't find a presupposition that says, "Homosexuality is OK as long as it isn't exploited." It's simply not part of God's plan at all.

Now when we take this unified Biblical view, the Sodom account makes sense without clubbing it to death. The same goes for the Levitical proscription (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). That is, homosexual activity is sinful not because of its association with pagan rites but because of its basic disharmony with the internal structure of creation.

Then, when we come to Romans 1, there is particular significance. The context presents homosexuality, along with many other fallen conditions, as a result of the breakdown of man's relationship with the Godhead, of which his heterosexual structure was once part. I think this makes more sense than the narrower concept of homosexual exploitation. By the way, this is not to say that if a man is struggling with homosexual desire, it is because he has no relationship with God. Paul speaks in general terms of the effects of mankind's departure from God. Individual Christians may still be experiencing those effects while continuing to grow in Christ, it appears to me.

And finally, Boswell gives a lot of space

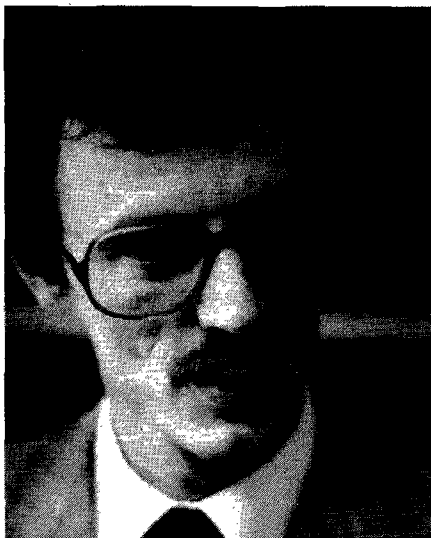
to demonstrating that the words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*, which appear in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:8-10, apply not to homosexuality, but to immorality in general and possibly to homosexual prostitution in particular. But what has he proved? That we must go elsewhere for counsel on sexuality—to the unified structure of Biblical heterosexuality. In the light of that, homosexuality is merely one sexual distortion among many others that are subsumed under the general terms *malakos* and *arsenokoites*.

**Spangler:** That's a very different conclusion from the one gay theology would make.

**Cook:** Yes, it is, because it doesn't take as a starting point the presupposition of "inversion." That presupposition is a distorted view of nature in light of the wider Biblical framework of the heterosexual creation of man. Richard Lovelace puts it well in his book *Homosexuality and the Church*: "An appeal to nature proves nothing in a fallen world." The victory of Christ breaks in upon nature and gives us the freedom to direct it rather than be directed by it.

**Spangler:** Let's go back to your experience. You were speaking about being trapped in "perfectionism." How did you get out of it and with what effect on your homosexuality?

**Cook:** For about six years following 1968, the protectiveness that perfectionism generates was beginning to crack up. On and off during that period, I was studying Ephesians, Corinthians, Daniel,



and Romans, from Dr. Sakae Kubo, Dr. Edward Heppenstall, and Dr. Hans LaRondelle. These men began to open up such a new world to me that I did a lot of intense private study on my own, reading Paul's letter to the Romans every chance I got. Luther's and Calvin's works helped me a great deal. So did commentaries by Anders Nygren and Charles Hodge. What emerged over those six years was a shift in focus from what the Spirit was doing in me to what God had done in Christ as the basis for my assurance before Him.

I can't tell you how this disturbed me! I felt uneasy believing it. I thought, What happens to the law, to holiness? I think I feared that if I ended all this spiritual self-concentration, all hell would break loose inside. But as this new focus on Jesus grew sharper, I began to sense awe over what it could mean for homosexuality. Yet I was both excited and frightened. Excited because maybe there was a way out of homosexuality after all. And frightened because if there was a way out, I'd be responsible if I didn't take it—and embarrassed if I did.

**Spangler:** Why embarrassed?

**Cook:** Well, something like: "If there is a way out of this by simple faith in Jesus, then why have I kicked up all this fuss and made such a big problem out of it?" Faith is humiliating, you know. Anyway, then a crisis came.

**Spangler:** That was when you left the ministry, wasn't it?

**Cook:** Yes; I hadn't yet learned how to apply this gospel to homosexuality. I just wasn't in control, so I decided to leave. At first it was exhilarating to have faced the issue head-on, but then the reaction set in. My job security was gone, along with my reputation, my financial base, and above all, the call to ministry that I had had in my teens. So much seeming waste. But I soon learned that this crisis was God's way of facing me with faith alone in Jesus Christ. There was nothing left but to throw myself on His mercy. I have since learned to respect a man's crisis; the Creator is at work building faith.

**Spangler:** How did you now see Jesus differently from the way you saw Him before?

**Cook:** Well, He was now head and shoulders above me. He was no longer the little Jesus in my heart, but the great sovereign Lord of the world. He was no longer merely my example whose victory I

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*Jesus was no longer merely my example whose victory I was to imitate. He was now my Victor, whose victory I could claim as my own. He was no longer my means to righteousness; He was my righteousness.*





*What was happening on the psychic level was a change of thought patterns. Negative rejectionism was being replaced with self-acceptance, as I kept thanking God for my new identity in Christ.*

was to imitate. He was now my Victor, whose victory I could boast about and claim as my own. He was now no longer my *means* to righteousness; He *was* my righteousness. Before, I saw Him as the justification for all my past sins. Now I saw Him as my justification for past, present, and future sins. Before, I saw Him as the Author of my salvation and the Holy Spirit as the Finisher. Now I saw Jesus as both the Author and Finisher, the Alpha and the Omega. He was now no longer the *means* to the death of self. He *was* my death of self. And He was now no longer my *means* to the resurrection life. He *was* the resurrection life. Before, I saw Him dying for my sins; now I saw Him as dying for my sinful nature. Before, I saw salvation as dependent on the strength of my faith in Jesus; now I saw it as dependent on the strength of Jesus, in whom I placed faith.

**Spangler:** Was it the book of Romans that led you principally to this new understanding?

**Cook:** Yes, for the most part—plus the crisis. I mention the crisis again, not because I think there's any virtue in having a crisis. I'm not an ascetic about this. But I think it's helpful to discern God in a crisis. He's not pushing you away. He's leading you to Him during these times.

But, yes, the book of Romans showed me that the gospel provided me with a righteousness from God—the life of Christ (see chap. 3:21). I needed to know so desperately how to be righteous before God, and I found it written in Romans 4:3 that all of Christ's goodness was charged to my account. I was treated as righteous, even when I was wicked, as long as I clung to Christ (see chap. 4:5). I needed to know that He wasn't displeased with me anymore, and I found that Christ was my propitiation (see chap. 3:25). He was my peace before God, a peace produced not by the depth of my surrender, which faltered so much through homosexual desire, but a peace created by His sacrifice that reconciled me while I was still an enemy (see chap. 5:1, 10). I needed to know that my sinful nature, with all its homosexual condition, would not be charged against me, and I read it there in Romans that my sinful body was reckoned as dead in His so that I need never feel condemned by the law (see chaps. 6:3, 6, 11; 7:4; 2 Cor. 5:14).

**Spangler:** So the change began when you believed God wasn't going to charge

your sinful nature against you anymore?

**Cook:** I know that's an idea that frightens some people, particularly perfectionists, because they think it implies a person can do what he wants. But it's actually the very opposite of that. By faith we accept that God looks upon us as if our sinful nature had already died, and we say to God, "You mean You're not charging all my feelings and urges against me?" "No," says God, "I'm setting you free from the guilt and the fear of them." And you respond, "Well, God, that gives me freedom to get up and try again with dignity and to believe I'm accepted. Now, I feel I can walk more willingly with You in the right way."

**Spangler:** You know, the principle you are enunciating is valid in all areas of Christian experience. It is the faith element. You believe that your prayers are answered, and you act upon that faith.

**Cook:** Yes, there is a simplicity to all this, but I don't want the simplicity to make it seem unreal. There was a lot of struggle, a lot of failure, a lot of doubt, but without condemnation now, without feeling cast off. What was happening here on the psychic level was a changing of thought patterns. Negative rejectionism was being replaced with self-acceptance, as I kept thanking God for my new identity in Christ.

And I think that as much as anything else, I needed to know that all the troubles I had seen in my life were not gone forever into waste. And I discovered there in Romans that Christ's grace now reigns over the powers of evil because of His victory at the cross (see chap. 5:16-21). So since God is for us, nothing can be against us (see chap. 8:31, 39). In fact, all that seems against us is actually in our favor. If the greatest tragedy—the murder of the Son of God—could be turned by this majestic Lord of ours into the greatest triumph, then my trials could be "the key not to the past but to the future," to quote Corrie ten Boom. She says in *The Hiding Place*: "The experiences of our lives, when we let God use them, become the mysterious and perfect preparation for the work He will give us to do."

**Spangler:** Well now, how did you begin to use this new understanding of the gospel?

**Cook:** Faith is God's gift, along with Christ. So when faith operates, things begin to happen. It's been my experience

that faith produces altered states of mind, a kind of heightening of reality—what the Scriptures might call "the renewing of your mind" through the Holy Spirit (chap. 12:2).

So I began to use this faith. I knew that Jesus was everything that I was not—my Victor, my Righteousness, my Salvation. I now had an outside point of reference—Jesus. All His goodness was reckoned as mine. I defined my true self by Him. I was not only righteous in Him, I was also heterosexual in Him, because He was the second Adam restoring all that the first Adam had lost (see 1 Cor. 15:45). I saw myself now not only as heterosexual by creation—though it had been buried by the homosexual condition—but also heterosexual by redemption.

I began to fight back with this new faith-understanding of myself. And it made me realize that the early homosexuality of my teen years was partly a problem of what the Bible calls a "weak conscience." We yield to our sense of insecurity and fear of the odd feelings inside until we realize that "I am a homosexual!" Most of us at that time do not know how to fight back with the authority of faith to give our emotions another direction.

**Spangler:** That certainly says something for the need of early training in faith and the gospel.

**Cook:** Yes, it does. But there's a great secret to the fight of faith. Since Christ has already brought in righteousness and victory for us, the first thing that faith does is to praise God for what He has done. I began a regular habit of praising God for everything Christ was to me and everything He reckons me to be in Him. I began to praise Him for victory in failure, for righteousness when I felt sinful, for His triumph in trials. I praised Him for a strong mind when I felt depressed, for destiny in purposelessness, and for heterosexuality in homosexuality.

I know this sounds almost silly. But the faith that praises is the pebble with which we slay Goliath, the foolish thing that shames all our wisdom. Just look at the Psalms. They ring with praise. Those men knew that the joy of the Lord was their strength (see Heb. 8:10). And the mood of Paul's writings is the same. Righteousness by faith is a song.

**Spangler:** Are you saying, then, that praising God through faith for what Christ was to you began to produce new emo-

tional responses?

**Cook:** I'm saying exactly that, Bob. You see, we have trained ourselves all our lives in guilt, fear, and shame because we sin and are sinful. But now Christ brings forgiveness and righteousness. If we learn to sing with it, we will find ourselves responding differently to life. For me, over the months I sensed anxiety beginning to lose its grip. Depressions were not so intense or prolonged. The guilt that aggravated them was breaking. Temptations became milder and lost their addictiveness as my perceptions of men changed. And I noticed a growing ability to relate to men with diminishing erotic overtones as I learned to push back condemnation through faith in Christ and as I learned to see them as whole persons, and not simply sexual objects.

As time went on, I began to realize that I had been locked for years into a grand illusion about myself—what I call the homosexual lie. Gradually, a new confidence grew as I daily affirmed my heterosexual identity in Christ. I began to claim the right by faith to have girlfriends, though I feared to do so at first. The personalities of women were kind of out of focus, but the more I reached out in faith to them, the more that focus sharpened, and their different personalities became distinguishable and attractive. Then emotional and physical responses began to develop as I went ahead in faith to express affection. I remember the first sexual arousal as I walked with a girlfriend through a summer field. I remember the first kiss.

I began praising God for my wife, whom I saw through the eye of faith four years before I ever met her. We have been married now for two and a half years. Sharon is God's most precious gift to me, next to Christ. She's full of beauty, charm, wit, and intelligence. It's delightful.

**Spangler:** Colin, you spoke earlier of homosexuality being an expression of man's distorted view of the world. The gospel heals that distortion, and therefore heals homosexuality?

**Cook:** Yes. Adam's shame drove him to put distance between himself and God. Shame is an awareness of being something opposite from what we should be. Adam saw God as holy, whereas he was sinful. He perceived Eve as opposite from him in a new sense, one to whom he could not fully disclose his shame. And so Adam hid to protect himself, and manipulated Eve before God to maintain that protection. Thus, when sin entered, Adam's view of God, himself, and the world was distorted, and increasingly so as he increased his self-protection and alienated reality from himself. Mankind has been doing this ever since and expressing it homosexually when the secondary causes come in.

But the entrance of Jesus changes our whole perception of reality and so heals the homosexual mind-set. He makes us feel safe with God by revealing His love. He

makes us feel safe with ourselves by forgiving us and giving us new identity in Him. He makes us feel safe in the world by His Lordship over it. Now the homosexual person no longer views the opposites of God's holiness and his own sinfulness as threatening. Jesus exists as his holiness, so he may feel at home, learning and growing in God's holiness. He is open to it, and it becomes a beautiful thing to him. Now he no longer despises his weakness, opposing it to God's strength. He rather sees God's strength as complementing his weakness. He is able to praise God for it, since it becomes an occasion for God to reveal Himself through it (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). Paradoxically, his acceptance of his weakness as a thing of beauty when united with God's strength becomes for him a source of strength.

And with this inner strength-by-weakness he is able to perceive the world of women differently. He is open to observe, because he no longer has to protect his shame. And as he observes and involves himself, he becomes aware that the softness of women, which he once perceived as weakness, is now becoming a thing of beauty. He sees the softness as a complement to his own new awareness of strength. And being more at ease with his own areas of weakness, he perceives a woman's different strength as a welcome addition to his life. It is not an opposite to be resisted, but one to be welcomed.

So it is this new harmony with life, this relaxed openness, this safety with the world that breaks down his need to protect

and manipulate and opens to him the new beauty that God has for him and delights to reveal.

**Spangler:** And this is what deliverance is?

**Cook:** Yes, but we need to clarify the meaning of deliverance. It is a deep-seated conviction of faith that you are heterosexual by creation and redemption; it is faith-knowledge that Christ has broken the power of homosexuality on the cross. It's also a releasing of the soul from guilt, fear, and shame by faith in the atonement of Christ, so that the emotions are released for heterosexual love and true affection for the same sex. And it's learning to live the new identity so that the homosexual habit is broken.

But it does not necessarily mean the absence of all temptation. In saying this, I would not want it construed that I am teetering on the edge of neurotic self-restraint, like the person Alcoholics Anonymous calls a "dry drunk"—one who has merely repressed his desire to drink, and badly wants to go back to it. I've met "recovered" homosexuals like that. No, the temptations of a person delivered from homosexuality are different. They are mild; they don't have the innate craving or longing because they don't have the same significance. They pass, and it's knowing how to let them pass calmly. When your new identity is established, your perception of men changes, and there isn't that psychic need to fulfill yourself in another male.

**Spangler:** I note that some psychiatrists say, Once a homosexual, always a homosexual. For example, C. A. Tripp, in *The Homosexual Matrix*, claims there is not one case history on record of recovery. Is Tripp—a homosexual himself—one who simply defines cure as meaning a complete loss of homosexual urges? Or . . .

**Cook:** This is partly a question of definition in which Tripp has fallen for the all-or-nothing of perfectionism. The Kinsey test of recovery is a subtle form of intimidation. If one has not shifted psychically from six on the scale (total homosexual) or five (near total homosexual) to zero (no homosexual responses at all), then one is not recovered or cured. This is absurd. It implies, "If I can't function as a heterosexual perfectly, then I won't function as a heterosexual at all." It is precisely this anxious unrealism that has prevented many homosexual persons (and



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heterosexual persons!) from making any progress at all. Our heterosexuality is not perfect, and it will not be until the kingdom. We are always learning to love more fully, more deeply. This is the very reason we seek to rest in Christ's perfect wholeness for us. When we hear God's call to live our lives heterosexually, then with every obedient step that we take we know that we are covered by the mercy of Christ's overarching righteousness.

In my opinion, Tripp and others who claim that homosexuality is unchangeable are following a dying cause. The issue of homosexual recovery today is at the same place the issue of alcoholic recovery was before 1935. Nobody thought it was possible short of creating a "dry drunk" and policing him for the rest of his life. But then Alcoholics Anonymous came along, and the bubble burst. Recovery was possible! It's the same in the homosexual area. There's a new groundswell that is leading thousands to believe in the possibility of recovery. I believe God will yet surprise us all with His mercy and grace, and if the world is still around in another thirty years, the question of whether a homosexual person can become heterosexual in his responses will sound like a discussion of nineteenth-century medicine!

**Spangler:** To change the focus a bit, Colin, what should a minister do when a homosexual person comes to him for help?

**Cook:** Well, of course we have to assume that the minister has a basic knowledge of Christian counseling skills, or at least has recourse to them. A very useful book is *The Promise of Counseling*, by C. W. Brister (Harper & Row). And an excellent sourcebook on various secular approaches, some of which can be used in the Christian context, is *Theories of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (3d ed.), by C. H. Patterson.

But apart from these basic skills, I believe that a minister needs a grand compassion for people. I'm not talking about a maudlin sympathy, but a compassion that loves and is strong. And he should have hope that the gospel can positively help the homosexual person. He should be able to listen, too. There are a great many ministers who don't give the homosexual person a chance to get the burden off his chest before they are coming up with the solution. Active listening is what is needed.

You know, when the Bible says that

Christ was numbered with the transgressors, there's a hidden structure there. It's the structure of identification. God's love is so deep that it fully enters into the human experience. It fully understands. I think that is what the pastor has to do too. He must so love and empathize that he enters into the homosexual person's experience. This builds trust and a willingness to reciprocate. But if he comes up with the solution too soon, the homosexual person will walk out of that office saying, "He didn't understand. He didn't even listen."

**Spangler:** That tendency to provide instant solutions often comes from anxiety, I think—a feeling that as pastors we have to demonstrate competence and do something as soon as possible.

**Cook:** But it's a bad mistake, because homosexuality doesn't go away overnight. In fact, in some way, the minister needs to convey a commitment to the homosexual person that he'll work with him on a weekly or twice-weekly basis or whatever, for as long as he needs, maybe one or two years, if necessary. The minister shouldn't be afraid to admit that he doesn't know everything about the problem and that he's willing to learn. I recommend very strongly five excellent books for background and concepts: *Homosexuality and the Church*, by Richard Lovelace; *Homosexuality: A Symbolic Confusion*, by Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse; *What You Should Know About Homosexuality*, edited by Charles W. Keyser; *The H Persuasion*, edited by Sheldon Kranz; and *Changing Homosexuality in the Male*, by Lawrence Hatterer. This last one is out of print at present, but you should be able to find a copy through a bookstore that searches for out-of-print copies.

**Spangler:** What about confidentiality? I've heard some pretty awful stories about breach of confidentiality.

**Cook:** I'm glad you mentioned that. There are some tragic stories in this connection. I heard of a homosexual person who went to a pastor in confidence, and the pastor immediately called the man's wife and told her that her husband was homosexual.

**Spangler:** And she had known nothing about it?

**Cook:** Nothing. The same minister announced from the pulpit the following Sabbath that this man was being relieved of his church offices because of homosexuality. Another minister I know of stood

over a man in a church business meeting, pointed a finger at him, and demanded, "Are you homosexual? Yes or no?" Now, as a matter of fact, this man was not practicing homosexuality, although he had that orientation. But his usefulness and acceptance in that church were ended. I know not all ministers are like this. But it happens far too often, with the result that for many homosexual people a minister would be the last person they would go to.

**Spangler:** It seems that many ministers fear the problem as if it were a contagious disease or something.

**Cook:** Let me speak frankly. Face the fact that within the heart of every one of us lurks a hidden contempt for the gospel. This is our sin. We either club a homosexual person over the head with condemnation or we ignore him because we are embarrassed that we can do so little to help. Now in my opinion, both of these responses reveal a hidden contempt. Please don't misunderstand me. We are all in this together. We have to face our hidden betrayer or it will destroy us. We have to ask ourselves, Can I take the gospel seriously? Does it speak to *all* human conditions? Or has my respect for it diminished over the years?

**Spangler:** What other helpful pointers could you give a minister who's asked to help a homosexual person?

**Cook:** Do not pigeonhole. Learn that though some homosexual people are bitter and dominant, others are quiet and submissive. Some are out of control; others are disciplined but unhappy. And still others are as happy as the average man. Help him to see that homosexuality is not primarily a sexual problem, but one of a distorted view of the world. The book *The H Persuasion* is very helpful here, as is the whole concept of *aesthetic realism*. If the homosexual person is a Christian, he'll be willing to see how the Fall has brought this distortion about and affected his view of God, self, and the world. And he'll be willing to consider how Christ destroys our guilt and shame and brings a new openness toward God, self, and world. If he's not a Christian, you can start him at the other end, examining, say, his distortions of parents, friends, work attitudes, and recreation. From either end, you work through these hidden self-protective manipulations we all engage in that lead us to diminish our self-respect and increase our contempt for the world around us. Whichever end

you start from, the nonreligious man will gain a new respect for God and faith, and the Christian will gain a new respect for the world.

As the homosexual person's faith grows, encourage him to praise God through all experiences. Through your acceptance and God's acceptance of him, he will learn to resist condemnation and depression and gain a new confidence. Failures will not hit him so hard. You'll calmly work through them with him, and turn them into a learning experience. Teach him the beauty of the Biblical structure of heterosexuality. Teach him to memorize useful passages of Scripture. Encourage the art of friendships with men. If he's afraid, encourage him to go forward. Trying and failing is better than not trying at all. God loves him still. And one day he will try and not fail.

Slowly he may gain a new openness toward women. Encourage him to claim his heterosexuality and get to know women. But do not lead him to believe that marriage is necessary in order to be recovered. He needs to understand that the possibility of love and marriage is open to him, but help him also to appreciate the very valid option of the single life, which when lived to its potential has its own kind of fulfillment. Marriage does not necessarily prove anything.

Well, there's a great deal I could say about all this, but the pastor who is willing to reach out in love will learn his way. You can make a thousand mistakes—and probably will—but if you persist in being loving, understanding, patient, and strong, then the Spirit of God will create the growth. In the book *What You Should Know About Homosexuality* two men state independently that the change came in their lives through two people who showed them unconditional love and with whom they could be totally open.

**Spangler:** What about the Homosexuals Anonymous program you are in the process of developing?

**Cook:** At Quest Learning Center, we've copyrighted a program that helps homosexual men and women through group support to work their way through to freedom from homosexuality. The program is quite new and will have been going for about a year by the time this interview goes to press. It's based on fourteen steps developed from Biblical truths and tested through my own experience and that of a member of the Quest staff, Douglas McIntyre. I'd like to enumerate these steps:

1. We admit that we are powerless over our homosexuality and that our emotional lives are unmanageable.

2. We come to believe the love of God, who forgives us and accepts us in spite of all that we are and have done.

3. We learn to see that there is a purpose in our suffering and that our failed lives are under the control of God, who is able to bring good out of trouble.

4. We come to believe that God has already broken the power of homosexuality and that He can therefore restore our true personhood.

5. We come to perceive that we have accepted a lie about ourselves, an illusion that has trapped us in a false identity.

6. We learn to claim the only true reality about ourselves, that our identity is heterosexual by creation and that God welcomes us to rediscover that identity in the person of Jesus Christ, as our faith perceives Him.

7. We resolve to entrust our lives to our loving God and to live by faith, praising Him for our new unseen identity, confident that it will become visible to us in God's good time.

8. As forgiven people free from guilt, we make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves, determined to root out fear, hidden hostility, and contempt for the world.

9. We admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs and humbly ask God to remove the defects of character.

10. We willingly make direct amends wherever wise and possible to all people we have harmed.

11. We determine to live no longer in fear of the world, believing that God's victorious control turns all that is against us into our favor, bringing advantage out of sorrow and order from disaster.

12. We determine to mature in our relationships with men and women, learning the meaning of a partnership of

equals, seeking neither dominance over people nor servile dependency on them.

13. We seek, through confident praying and the wisdom of Scripture, for an ongoing growth in our relationship with God and a humble acceptance of His guidance for our lives.

14. Having had a spiritual awakening, we try to carry this message to homosexual people with a love that demands nothing and to practice these steps in all our life's activities, as far as lies within us.

I can imagine nothing more beautiful than a minister with this grand compassion working his own personal way through these steps with a group of, say, half a dozen homosexual people on a weekly basis.

**Spangler:** Those are simply beautiful steps, Colin. Everybody, homosexual and heterosexual, can learn something from them.

Let me ask you a question that I'm sure will occur to some people. At a Homosexuals Anonymous meeting, wouldn't you have a built-in problem of attraction between participants? Couldn't this create more problems than it solves?

**Cook:** Our experience has been the opposite. There is a great deal of loneliness in the homosexual life. Homosexuals need the experience of nonerotic friendships. When people come together in a group committed to such high ideals as this, there is a sense of safety that creates an openness toward good relationships and a closure toward bad ones.

**Spangler:** These meetings could be held in churches during the week, just as AA does in many cities, couldn't they?

**Cook:** Yes. Some church members might be uncomfortable with that, but this is where it is necessary to educate the membership and make a dual call for repentance not only from homosexual people but from all of us. There is such a strong sense of malice among many Christians when one suggests a ministry in this area that one is compelled to question their spiritual experience. Such persons have a tendency to define sin in shallow legalistic and behavioral terms, totally unaware of the roots of humanity's sin problem. Once again, spiritual perfectionism rears its head—that tendency to find our own human solution to sin and to protect self by putting distance between ourselves and the needs of others. This also allows us to create an illusion of holiness. If we do not



*The pastor who is willing to reach out in love will find his way. You can make a thousand mistakes, but if you persist in being loving, understanding, patient, and strong, the Spirit will create the growth.*



*The call to homosexual freedom is grounded in the law of God, not in the possibility of change. The possibility of homosexual freedom is grounded in the cross, which leads to change.*

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break away from this tendency, we shall never have anything to say to this generation.

Let me put it to you this way: Our own church has struggled hard to come to a more adequate understanding of the great truth of righteousness by faith in Christ over the past decade or so. Is this merely an aerial dogfight? Are we all searching for a precise way of saying things that will please all sides, so that we can sit down with a sigh and say, "Very good, we've got it right at last"? Or do we realize that the gospel is the greatest news since the Fall? News that frees the oppressed, breaks yokes, and delivers captives? Let me say this because I feel it in the depths of my soul: There are homosexual people out there, the product of broken homes and other painful experiences, some of whom have never known the love of a father or mother? I ask you, How are they ever going to know the love and mercy of God unless the community of believers act it out for them in their attitude toward sinners? The great message is that God, who treats me as righteous when I am, in fact, a sinner, calls on me to do the same for others. We are to be the new fathers and mothers, the new brothers and sisters, making visible again the love of God.

**Spangler:** It's going to take some training to help members to understand this ministry of healing to others.

**Cook:** There's a work for the ministry to do here. A very interesting example of such healing fellowships is reported in an article by Drs. Mansell and Myrna Pattison, in the December, 1980, edition of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, entitled "Ex-Gays: Religiously Mediated Change in Homosexuals." It reports on a church group that had a hot line for homosexual people. Once these people contacted the hot line, they were taught the gospel and invited to accept Christ and join the church. They were lovingly accepted, just as any other sinner would be. No demand was made upon them to change their sexual orientation, although it was explained unjudgmentally that homosexual acts were immoral and that they would be expected not to engage in such acts. They were further taught that their homosexual condition was simply a Christian immaturity and that they would learn how to be heterosexual as Christian maturity developed. They were invited to engage in nonerotic relationships with the men and

women of the church and also invited into Bible study groups where they learned about expected patterns of mature life styles.

Now I think here is a pattern that many Christian communities could learn from. Think how many could have been saved from homosexuality if this had been a consistent way of acting in Christian communities.

**Spangler:** One final question. What many church members fear, I think, is that an outreach to homosexual people is going to result in church acceptance of the gay life style. What's your thought on that?

**Cook:** If we understand our faith, it's impossible. This fear is one more example of our hidden contempt for the gospel. Our desperate need to protect ourselves limits our perceptions of Jesus until we instinctively sense that those perceptions of Him are inadequate.

What do we face? A claim that homosexuality is unchangeable, that one cannot make the psychic shift from 6 on the Kinsey scale (total psychic homosexual response) to 0 (total psychic heterosexual response). Therefore change is impossible. There is tragic irony here. People who follow gay theology have fallen for a new secular perfectionism that says, It's all or nothing. If I can't change completely, I won't change at all. It is one more system of self-protection from reality. We place ourselves in boxes and say, "I'm in here, and I can't get out. So don't touch me."

But change is not the issue, even though the fact that change is possible gives us hope and encouragement. No, the issue is elsewhere. There is an inward heterosexual structure to the world given to man at Creation. There is a structure to all of life. Men have discovered it in other areas. Noam Chomsky's studies on the "inner language" of the brain, for instance. Leonard Bernstein's concepts of a universal principle to all music. Claude Levi-Strauss's philosophy of structuralism—all hint of a structure that could be very suggestive of divine law.

As Adventists, we have recognized that divine law, that great structure, was firmly established in the creation of the world of mankind. It was restated at Sinai and confirmed by Jesus our Lord. It is broad and wide and deep, holding together the very planet on which we exist. As long as we keep this law separate from our assurance of salvation, as long as we do not allow it to

encroach on our peace, we shall be able to see the law comfortably as a vehicle through which man expresses the fullest potential of his new Christ identity. Christ releases us for love. His law directs how love shall be expressed.

The call to homosexual freedom is grounded in the law of God, not in the possibility of change. The possibility of homosexual freedom is grounded in the cross, which leads to change. The issue is this: Is homosexuality right or wrong? The issue is faith that obeys the call of God. When God calls us, we are not permitted to ask, "But will it work?" We are called to move forward in faith. If I had waited to know whether a total shift could be made by me from 6 to 0 on the Kinsey scale, I would never have moved.

It does not embarrass me to say that I still experience temptation from time to time. But as I said earlier, I am not teetering on the edge of neurotic self-restraint. That would be mere repression by the iron force of fear. When one's distorted view of the world is broken up, he perceives men and women in a new and different way, and temptation does not have the same meaning anymore. Jesus alone is my true righteousness and heterosexual identity. We never graduate from Jesus. Freedom starts with faith and ends with faith in His wholeness. As Paul says, it's "from faith to faith" (Rom. 1:17).

Even though this side of the kingdom our heterosexuality is imperfect, we walk forward in obedience to the law of God, not frightened by our inadequacy. Jesus is our perfection. There is nothing hanging over us. So we have the boldness to live our imperfection courageously.

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### More Information

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*Contemporary culture is forcing Christians to reconsider their historic theological understandings of homosexuality. At the editors' request, the author examines whether Scripture or human experience shall have the normative role.*

by Raoul Dederen

## Homosexuality: a Biblical perspective

**T**he gay crisis has come to church. Some homosexuals are coming to church not only for forgiveness and mercy but to say to the church, as they have to the world, "Homosexuality is not sinful; it is natural to me. God made me this way. He accepts me and my homosexuality as good. Therefore the time has come for the church to accept me as I am and join me in saying that gayness is good."

The crisis is no longer "out there"; it is at the doorstep of most Christian churches, challenging the traditional Judeo-Christian stand on this issue and pressing for a radical shift from rejection of homosexuality to affirmation of it as a part of the Creation that God deems good.

Until recently the church solidly regarded active homosexuality as sin and a contagious illness, although repentant, sexually inactive homosexuals were welcome in the church—at least theoretically. In recent years, however, various studies and individuals have raised questions about the church's traditional approach to the problem.

Since the publication in 1955 of Derrick Sherwin Bailey's *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*,<sup>1</sup> books on homosexuality and the church have been rolling off both secular and church presses in increasing numbers.<sup>2</sup> Much of this material is favorable to an active "Christian" homosexual life style. At the same time, denominational-wide task forces and

study commissions have responded by drafting study documents on homosexuality for the United Church of Christ, the United Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., the Episcopal Church, and the American Lutheran Church, among others.

Contemporary culture, too, is exerting pressure on the church's traditional, historic theology of homosexuality by means of new data provided by the social sciences. Though the lack of scientific agreement is often frustrating, Christians are discovering that a greater variety exists among homosexuals than was generally believed. Not all male homosexuals are effeminate in manners, speech, and gait; nor are all female homosexuals mannish in appearance, athletically inclined, or prone to wear men's attire. Some homosexuals (like heterosexuals) are promiscuous and sex-obsessed, while others lead quiet lives.

The very nature and cause of homosexuality remains probably the most frustrating issue. In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from its lists of illnesses, but there is no agreement in the secular sciences concerning its nature and origin. The central unresolved question is whether homosexuality is to be considered normal or abnormal. The implications of one's answer are enormous. If homosexuality is a normal variation of human sexuality, the issue of cure becomes superfluous. If it is a sickness or abnormality, its cause and treatment become essential. Here again, the scientific data remains conflicting and incomplete.

Some clinicians and therapists claim that certain homosexual persons may be "constitutional," i.e., born to be so, and

that homosexuality apparently originates at preconscious levels of personality formation, so early in life as to be immovably fixed as a part of one's being. Others contend that homosexuality is not a preordained condition, but rather seems to arise out of a complex set of conditions, including both personal and psychological damage caused by one's environment.

What is clear, however, is that homosexuality involves both one's "orientation" and one's expression of it. Gay advocates insist that homosexuality is first a "condition," or an "orientation," and only secondarily the thoughts and actions arising from that condition. This distinction, they hold, has been recognized only lately by Christians. Such an orientation is understood to mean that a person is attracted toward his or her own gender, and such an attraction is regarded as much a natural part of that person as is attraction to the opposite sex to a heterosexual person. In their book *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? Another Christian View* (1978) coauthors Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott contend that for those who have exclusively homosexual drives and cannot change, the most Christian solution is often a committed, responsible, and permanent homosexual relationship. Such an individual, in their view, is no more sick or immoral than someone who is left-handed.<sup>3</sup>

Such a conclusion, of course, goes against all traditional interpretation of the Scriptures on this issue. Scanzoni and Mollenkott (and others) are willing to take such a position because in their eyes what the Bible condemns is certain kinds of homosexual practices—notably gang rape, idolatry, and lustful promiscuity—not the idea of "a permanent, committed relationship of love between homosexuals analogous to heterosexual marriage."<sup>4</sup> The Bible, they contend, is silent on the homosexual condition as such, and therefore its views on homosexuality fail to apply to many homosexual persons today.

Such homosexual advocates understand the sins of Sodom (Genesis 19) and Gibeah (Judges 19) as violent gang raping and inhospitality, probably not even committed by people with homosexual orientation. They generally agree that the Levitical regulations (Lev. 18:22; 20:13) against male homosexual acts refer to homosexual activity, but they regard them as relative warnings not against homosexuality *per se*, but against having relations with male-cult prostitutes employed for pagan religious rituals.

Likewise, in the view of such individuals, Romans 1:26, 27 describes homosexual acts in the context of lust and idolatry and thus does not fit the case of a sincere homosexual Christian who loves Christ and wants to acknowledge God but who feels drawn to someone of the same sex for the sake of love rather than lust. The same argument is usually extended to 1 Corin-

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thians 6:9, 10 and 1 Timothy 1:10, 11, which are judged irrelevant to the Christian homosexual since, in this view, the passages are describing the same-sex abuses rather than a lifelong homosexual condition or orientation.

To no one's surprise, Scanzoni and Mollenkott conclude their study of the scriptural references to homosexuality as follows: "Since the Bible is silent about the homosexual condition, those who want to understand it must rely on the findings of modern behavioral science research and on the testimony of those who are themselves homosexual."<sup>5</sup>

**W**hile this reappraisal of the Biblical judgments on homosexuality can be made to appear plausible, the Biblical context hardly favors it. It may very well be true that Genesis 19 is concerned not with homosexuality in general, but with violent homosexual rape. However, the view that inhospitality, not homosexuality, is the sin here condemned seems hardly likely. Why would Lot offer his daughters to people who came only with a demand to check on two foreigners? The context seems clear that the men of Sodom wanted to abuse Lot's visitors sexually. The same is true of the similar account of Judges 19.

Nor does there seem to be any conclusive reason to depart from the usual interpretation of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. Admittedly, most Christians ignore the prohibition against intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period, referred to in the same Levitical code (chap. 20:18), or the instruction not to wear garments with two kinds of yarn (chap. 19:19). Yet to argue that the historical context of the prohibition against homosexual intercourse is the need for ceremonial cleanness or the desire to separate oneself from the fertility cults of Israel's neighbors and their male prostitutes is extremely unconvincing. There simply is no positive evidence for cultic homosexuality in Canaanite religions. In the absence of such contextual evidence, it seems sound scholarship to assert that these Levitical texts consider homosexuality *per se* as sinful, because it perverts the intended sexual and familial relationship for humankind.

Regarding the New Testament's testimony, gay advocates quite correctly underline that in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 the nature of the homosexual sin condemned depends on two Greek words combined and rendered as "sexual perverts" in the Revised Standard Version. *Malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* are probably more obscure in their meaning than generally thought. Still, they seem to refer to the passive (*malakos*) and the active (*arsenokoitēs*) partners in a particular kind of homosexual activity, possibly male prostitution or perversion of young boys.

First Timothy 1:10 is somewhat similar to the statement in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, since the term *arsenokoitai* (translated "sodomites") is once again used. Does it refer only to homosexuals who act abusively and perversely, or does it mean all those who are engaged in homosexual activities? The second meaning seems more likely, but there remains room for reasonable doubt.

Finally, there is Paul's statement in Romans 1:26, 27: "God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men" (R.S.V.). On its face, the text denounces as sinful both male and female homosexual acts. Gay advocates argue, however, that Paul was not censuring "healthy," "natural" homosexuality at all, but degenerate, thrill-seeking homosexual experimentation among *heterosexuals* for whom such relationships would be "unnatural" and thus condemned by the apostle. Homosexual practices, set in the motivating context of love for God and one another, are no longer regarded as "unnatural" for sincere Christians and therefore escape altogether the condemnation intended by this passage, says the Christian homosexual. Besides, if homosexual behavior really is what Paul had in mind, it is only *idolatrous* homosexuality that the apostle is denouncing here, he adds.

A simple reading of the context, however, is enough to establish that Paul's concern in Romans 1 was not one of idolatry and homosexual abuse, but rather the fall of humanity and its resultant disorders. Paul's intention is not to single out a group of sinners as more despicable than others, or merely to expose certain sinful practices. The apostle is in fact arguing that "all have sinned" (chap. 3:23), and uses homosexual practices as an illustration of the disorder brought about by sin.<sup>6</sup> The disorders he mentions are not wrong because they issue from idolatry; they are wrong in and of themselves. Indeed, in Romans 1:24-27 *all* human sexuality, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is depicted as disordered by man's inherent drive toward self-centeredness, his rebellion against God, and the chaos that the Fall provoked. In light of the present evidence, it seems valid to con-

clude that Romans 1:26, 27 understands homosexual practice to be sin in and of itself.

One should keep in mind, however, that a discussion of these individual Biblical texts, no matter how soundly interpreted, can still fall short of the truth if it fails to ground the explication of occasional references to homosexuality in the more primary Biblical understanding of human sexuality. An adequate understanding of homosexuality can be gained only within the larger context of an investigation of the Biblical doctrine of human sexuality. And on this point the Scriptures are quite explicit.

The very opening chapters of Genesis make clear that sexuality belongs to Creation itself. The Creation narrative establishes that God did not create man alone. Nor did He create man/man or woman/woman. He created mankind as male and female. God's image in humanity is incomplete without both man and woman. This also means that the aim of Christian sexuality is not personal satisfaction, but interpersonal completeness. "They become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, R.S.V.; cf. Mark 10:48). We have here not simply a relationship of two persons, but a relationship between male and female. In Sakae Kubo's words: "It is not the relationship as such but the complementary character of the relationship that is significant."<sup>7</sup> Completeness is the union of opposites, the coming together of differences, not simply sexual differences—though these are fundamental to a Biblical understanding of sexuality—but such differences as personality, temperament, social function, and aspiration, all gathered into the physical symbol of gender differentiation. By this standard, homosexual liaisons witness to incompleteness.

Old and New Testament references to marriage and sexuality, the thrust of the Genesis account, the testimony of Jesus and Paul about Creation, marriage, and the Fall, are parts of a whole fabric that unanimously and undeviatingly portrays heterosexual love as God's will, and therefore as good and normative.

It is true that the Scriptures are silent about the homosexual "condition," as distinguished from lustful homosexual practices. This shouldn't surprise us, since the Scriptures usually show little interest in the condition in which we find ourselves

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*An adequate understanding of homosexuality can be gained only within the larger context of an investigation of the Biblical doctrine of human sexuality. And on this point the Scriptures are quite explicit.*

when we face temptation. It rather speaks to our response. Thus adulterers are not exonerated because of their sinful condition. They are asked to give up their adultery. No doubt some adulterers sincerely and deeply love each other; but they are not excused on this account. Nor are they offered a compromise, or urged to make their relationship as permanent and loving as possible. Indeed, they are called to abandon it and return to their marriage partners.

This is not to say that people with either adulterous or homosexual desires or temptations are guilty of sin. But they are responsible for how they respond to those drives, as all of us are responsible for how we react to various kinds of temptations. The responsibility for people driven by homosexual urges is far from easy. But is it impossible for homosexuals to be healed and transformed in their sexual orientation?

**S**ome are adamant about the failure of true homosexuals to be able to change their homosexual orientation. "There is not one shred of evidence of a *validated* conversion to *heterosexual orientation* through therapy or Christian conversion and prayer," writes Ralph Blair.<sup>5</sup> Others hold that homosexuals can be, and indeed are being, healed and transformed in their sexual orientation, as Paul himself asserts (1 Cor. 6:11), through the full resources of grace available to the Christian.

It is true that until recently, little, if any, scientifically valid evidence existed showing that such a change in sexual orientation could occur within the church or anywhere else. However, in a recent article published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, E. Mansell Pattison, M.D., and Myrna Loy Pattison, from the Department of Psychiatry and Health Behavior, Medical College of Georgia, documented eleven cases of men who claim to have changed their sexual orientation from exclusive homosexuality to exclusive heterosexuality through participation in a pentecostal church fellowship.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Pattison's work is not without corroboration,<sup>10</sup> and though some homosexuals in the study were not "cured," one can no longer speak of the impossibility of change in one's sexual orientation, and, for that reason, of the "naturalness" of homosexuality among exclusive homosexuals.

This is good news for Christians who care about their homosexual brothers and sisters. The church should not feel a responsibility to engage in a search-and-destroy mission against active homosexuals, including those who are already in its midst. It should rather issue a challenge to homosexuals to search their consciences and to repent from sin. The church must, without hesitation, stand behind the teachings of Scripture, but at the same

time it needs to show compassion and strive to understand the personal struggles of homosexuals. The most important witness of Scripture regarding homosexuality is not condemnation but the promise of liberation—liberation from an old life in bondage to sin and to a new life of freedom in Jesus Christ! Let us take seriously the promises of the Spirit's work and His power of healing.

At the same time, much of the repentance that needs to be done on this issue needs to be done by straight people, including straight Christians. We are prone to forget that as heterosexual sinners we have no superior vantage point from which to look down on homosexual sinners. Indeed, our sins of neglect, fear, and hatred may more than once have kept the homosexual from finding Christ and liberation. Could it be that our inability to maintain an attitude of compassionate concern for homosexuals while disapproving of an active homosexual life style may actually indicate a serious lack of conviction of sin in our own lives?

At the bottom the issue is not homosexuality. It is morality. The issue before us is not gay rights—the sanction of a life style of avowed and practicing homosexuality—but God's rights, His right to call us to Himself, to repentance, to a life of grateful and joyous compliance with His will.

Contemporary culture is forcing Christians to reconsider their theological understanding of homosexuality. Interestingly, the developing lines of division among us are often merely a reflection of conflicting views concerning the usefulness and rightful place of personal, cultural, and scientific observation in the theological process.

Increasing weight is being given by some to the "facts" proposed by social scientists on the nature of homosexuality. But nature, though created by God, remains marred and distorted by sin. It requires and must be judged according to an authoritative external standard, namely God's word as revealed in the Scriptures. That word should guide us in our observation of the world around us. It should remain one's theological norm. The issue at stake here is whether the Scriptures are to be the ultimate rule of our faith and convictions or whether they are to yield their normative role to human experience, reason, or contemporary scientific hypotheses. Today's suggestion that we move away from the first alternative and adopt the

second reveals an absence of theological understanding of the church's prophetic role in calling its members and the world to repentance from individual and social sin.

There is considerable confusion both in society and in the church concerning homosexuality and homosexual practice. People are asking for a clear word, for a Biblical word, a word from God rather than the changing opinions of men. The words that reflect the character of Christ, our Lord, when confronting moral laxity and broken people, are still words that combine compassion with moral firmness.

<sup>1</sup> Published in London by Longmans, Green, and Co.

<sup>2</sup> Among the more significant studies are Robert Wood, *Christ and the Homosexual* (New York: Vantage Press, 1960); Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964); H. Kimball Jones, *Toward a Christian Understanding of the Homosexual* (New York: Association Press, 1966); W. Norman Pittenger, *Time for Consent: A Christian's Approach to Homosexuality* (London: SCM Press, 1970); Troy Perry, *The Lord Is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing Co., 1972); Barbara Evans, *Joy!* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1973); Clinton Jones, *Homosexuality and Counseling* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); Lewis Smedes, *Sex for Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); Letha Scanzoni and Virginia R. Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? Another Christian View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); Don Williams, *The Bond That Breaks: Will Homosexuality Split the Church?* (Los Angeles: B.I.M. Publishing Co., 1978); Richard F. Lovelace, *Homosexuality and the Church* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Pages 77, 78.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 72.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> Paul's statement that homosexual practices are "against nature" does not mean that they are against the natural orientation of an individual. "Against nature" rather means against God's intention for human sexual behavior, which is plainly visible in nature.

<sup>7</sup> Sakae Kubo, *Theology and Ethics of Sex* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1980), p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Letter to the editor, *Eternity*, July, 1977, p. 56.

<sup>9</sup> "Ex-Gays' Religiously Mediated Change in Homosexuals," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 137:12 (December, 1980), pp. 1553-1563. The report was first presented at the 132d annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, Chicago, Illinois, May 12-18, 1979.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Robert K. Johnston, "Homosexuality: (1) Can It Be 'Cured'?" *The Reformed Journal*, March, 1981, pp. 11, 12.

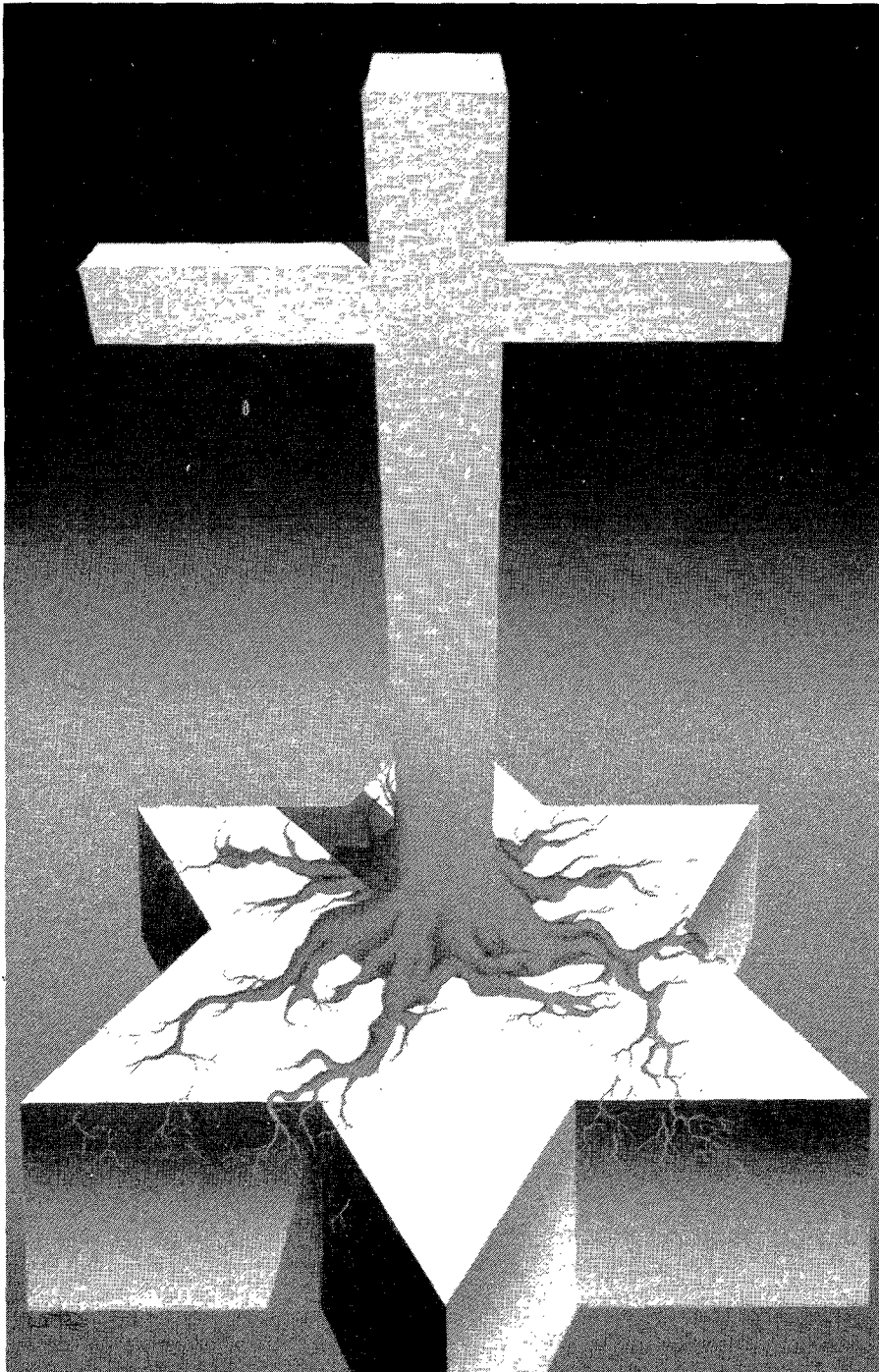
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*The most important witness of Scripture regarding homosexuality is not condemnation but the promise of liberation—liberation from an old life of bondage to sin and to a new life of freedom in Jesus Christ!*

Is there a dichotomy between the church and Israel in the New Testament? Are there two sets of promises in the Bible—one delivered to Israel and the other given to the church? If so, do the promises directed originally to the remnant relate solely to Israel, or can they have meaning for the church as well?

by Hans K. LaRondelle

## Is the church spiritual Israel?



**T**he doctrine of the church is of decisive importance in dispensationalism.

According to C. C. Ryrie, the church is "distinct from Israel and not a new spiritual Israel."<sup>1</sup> God has two different purposes and programs for Israel and the church "within His overall plan." Ryrie goes on to declare: "The Church is not fulfilling in any sense the promises to Israel. . . . The Church age is not seen in God's program for Israel. It is an intercalation."<sup>2</sup> The New Testament does not "enmesh them [God's promises to Israel] into the Church."<sup>3</sup> "And all this," Ryrie claims, "is built on an inductive study of the use of two words [Israel and church], not a scheme superimposed on the Bible."<sup>4</sup> His conclusion is: "Use of the words *Israel* and *Church* shows clearly that in the New Testament national Israel continues with her own promises and the Church is never equated with a so-called 'new Israel' but is carefully and continually distinguished as a separate work of God in this age."<sup>5</sup>

Can these assertions be substantiated from the New Testament, using the grammatical-historical method of exegesis, as dispensationalism claims? What are the rules of such exegesis?

### The role of the context

A basic principle of exegesis that is sometimes ignored in doctrinal constructions is the determining role of the context—allowing each text or term to receive its particular meaning from its own immediate context. The interpreter always faces the danger of superimposing the meaning of a term in one historical context upon the same term in another, different historical context of Holy Scripture. It is plain that when two texts seemingly contradict each other at face value, each needs to be understood from its own historical and literary context (for example, see Rom. 3:28 and James 2:24).

Thus, the meaning of the term *Israel* as

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WARREN ROOD

used in Paul's letter to the Romans must be determined by the context of Romans, and his use of the same term in his letter to the Galatians must be understood by the context in Galatians. These historical contexts differ considerably and may not be ignored or denied for the sake of constructing doctrinal uniformity. That would be a forced, dogmatic exegesis, which is no longer open to the nuances of the Biblical contexts.

### **"Israel" in the context of Romans**

It seems clear that in Romans 9-11 Paul is distinctly concerned with his kinsmen, the Jewish people, and that he indeed distinguishes between Israel (whether ethnic Israel outside the church or believing Jews) on the one hand and believing Gentiles within the church at Rome on the other. But why? Did he distinguish between Israel and the Gentiles on the principle that God has two kinds of people with two different eschatological promises and destinies? The internal evidence points to the contrary.

For example, Paul warns the two factions within the church at Rome (Jews and Gentiles) not to boast against each other about some alleged superiority or prerogative (see Rom. 11:18, 25; 12:3).<sup>6</sup> Paul's differentiation of ethnic origins within the Christian faith-community did not lead him to distinguish between two different covenant promises for Israel and Gentiles. The very opposite is the case.

The apostle's burden is to recapture the original purpose of Israel's election on behalf of all nations—to be a blessing to all the families of the world by sharing with them the saving light of Israel's covenants and of her worship of the one and only Creator-Redeemer (see Isa. 42:1-10; 49:6).

Against the background of this plan of God, Paul reports the surprising fact that "Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith [in Messiah Jesus]; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it" (Rom. 9:30, 31).<sup>7</sup> To the apostle, the decisive test for standing in the proper covenant relation with God is to exercise faith in Christ as the Messiah of Israel (see verse 33). Such faith assures the covenant blessings. The Gentiles have no other covenant with God than God's covenant with Israel.

Paul's symbolic portrayal in Romans 11 of an engrafting of wild olive branches (Gentiles) into the one and only family tree (the Israel of God) vividly proclaims the basic unity and continuity of God's covenants with the patriarchs (the root) and Israel (the trunk) on the one hand and with the church of Christ on the other.

Through faith in Christ, Gentiles are incorporated in the olive tree, the people of God, and share in the root of Abraham (see verse 18). The conclusion is not that God preferred them to Jews (see verse 19),

but as Paul says elsewhere to the Gentile Christians, "You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Eph. 2:19).

The lesson of the parable of the one cultivated olive tree in Romans 11 is that the church of Christ lives from the root and the trunk of Old Testament Israel. Paul's specific point, however, is to reveal a divine "mystery" concerning natural Israel: "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number [plērōma] of the Gentiles has come in. And so [houtōs, in this way] all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:25, 26).

There seems to be almost unanimous agreement among commentators that Paul speaks here about ethnic Israel, and her way of salvation in an unbreakable connection with the salvation of the Gentiles. The apostle even presents an interaction between the salvation of "all Israel," or the "fullness" [plērōma] of Israel (verse 12) and the final and full ingathering of all Gentiles to Christ. His point is not one of an order of dispensations but the spiritual response to Christ of many (if not the majority) of Jews, a response that grows out of sincere envy to the clear manifestation of God's mercy in Christ to the Gentiles. "Just as you [Gentile Christians] who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience [Jewish rejection of Christ], so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all" (verses 30-32).

One can observe here a striking undulation of God's salvation: "God grants no mercy to Israel without the gentiles, but neither does he do so to the gentiles without Israel."<sup>8</sup>

Enraptured by this amazing vision of God's faithfulness to His covenant promise in spite of Israel's faithlessness—God's call to Israel is "irrevocable" (verse 29)—Paul opens up a surprising perspective of the "mystery" of God's saving purpose for the human race as a whole: divine mercy flowed from Israel to the Gentiles in order that "all Israel" would be aroused to long for the same mercy the Gentiles have received. Israel has not fallen "beyond recovery. Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to

the Gentiles to make Israel envious" (verse 11).

The apostle reveals a strange interdependence between the full inflow of Gentiles into salvation (through the gospel preaching) and the accepting of Christ by "all Israel." This very "interdependence" Paul calls a "mystery," even God's intention to bring natural Israel back to Himself and to the cultivated "olive tree" of election by grace by means of the (largely Gentile) church of Christ (faith is aroused through "envy"). It is of decisive importance to grasp this "mystery" because only in this interdependence of Israel and the church can the gospel of salvation—justification by grace through faith—be maintained. Herman Ridderbos enlarges upon this very point. He says, regarding Romans 11: "There is no question of another conversion than that which results from the preaching of the gospel in history (cf. chaps. 10:14ff.; 11:11, 14, 22) and from the activity presently coming to them from the believing Gentile world (chap. 11:31)."<sup>9</sup>

How does dispensationalism connect this Pauline hope for ethnic Israel with the gospel preaching of the cross of Christ when its axiom states that "the glory of God is to be realized *not only in salvation but also in the Jewish people*"?<sup>10</sup> How will Israel be saved according to dispensational theology? Bruce Corley in his article "The Jews, the Future, and God (Romans 9-11)" presses this question further by asking: "Are we to wait for an apocalyptic miracle to happen seven years after the 'fulness of the Gentiles' has been raptured out of the world? Will the Jews come by preferential treatment or through justification by faith? The former option cuts the heart out of the Pauline gospel."<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, in Romans 11:26 ("so") Paul emphasizes that "all Israel" will be saved in precisely the same way as all the Gentiles: by *faith in Christ alone*, by the confession from the heart that Jesus is the risen Lord of Israel (see chap. 10:9-13). He states explicitly God's irrevocable condition for Israel's salvation: "If they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again" (chap. 11:23). National Israel had largely come to claim God's covenant promises by trusting in her relation to father Abraham and therefore to expect God's eschatological blessings as an *unconditional* guarantee (see Matt. 3:7-9; John 8:33, 34).

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*To the apostle, the decisive test for standing in the proper covenant relation with God is to exercise faith in Christ as the Messiah of Israel. Such faith assures the covenant blessings.*

Against this attitude of boasting in Israel's ethnic advantage (see Rom. 2:25-29), the apostle declares: "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (chap. 10:12, 13; cf. chap. 3:22-24). Thus Paul removes every difference between Jew and Gentile before God.

Paul's cutting edge against *natural* Israel is to reveal that her attitude of self-righteousness, of making claims before God while rejecting the Messiah Himself and the gospel of Yahweh (see chap. 9:31-10:4), is the very cause of her fall and rejection. But this does not mean that God has rejected His people Israel (see chap. 11:11, 15)!

### Application of remnant theology

The apostle appeals to the well-known "remnant" promises of Israel's prophets to maintain his thesis that God's covenant promises have *not* failed, although natural Israel, as a nation, did fail to accept the kingship of Messiah Jesus. "It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" (chap. 9:6).

Thus, Paul continues the Old Testament distinction of a spiritual Israel within national Israel. The prophets called this spiritual Israel "the remnant," and it was to be the bearer of God's covenant promises. In the faithful remnant, Israel continued always as the people of God. God provided the remnant by His sovereign grace and thus showed that in every judgment on natural Israel He did not reject those of His people who trusted and obeyed Him. God's covenant promises can never be used as claims against Him outside of a living faith-obedience relationship to the Lord. The promise and faith belong inseparably together, as Paul states, "The promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace" (chap. 4:16). Dispensationalism accepts this truth for the individual Israelite only, but not for national Israel. Ryrie comments on Romans 9:6 (with its distinction of Israel within Israel): "In the Romans passage Paul is reminding his readers that being an Israelite by natural birth does not assure one of the life and favor promised the believing Israelite who approached God by faith."<sup>12</sup>

He concludes that in Paul's view a natural Israelite has no right to claim God's covenant promise of "life and favor" that God has assured in both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. Why not? Because faith and trust in the Lord and His Messiah are God's condition—not the basis—for receiving His blessings! However, this condition is safeguarded and maintained in Israel's remnant, chosen by God's sovereign will. Anders Nygren explains: "A 'remnant' is not just a group of separate individuals, taken out of a people doomed to overthrow; it is itself the chosen people,

it is Israel *in nuce*. . . . In the 'remnant' Israel lives on as the people of God. . . . God's free and sovereign grace decides who shall belong to the 'remnant.' . . . But according to God's election, the 'remnant' had been brought to faith in Christ. It comes before God with no claims; it knows it is wholly dependent on God's grace. Therefore, as the spiritual Israel, it now receives the fulfillment of the promise."<sup>13</sup>

Paul does not operate with dispensationalism's distinction between individual and national Israel, in which the individual has only conditional promises and the nation has only unconditional promises within the same covenant. Paul continues the Hebrew prophets' theology of the faithful remnant. "Only the remnant will be saved" (chap. 9:27; citing Isa. 10:21-23, where Israel's remnant returns "to the Mighty God").

Paul's message is that God is faithful to His word because He has again graciously provided a believing remnant of Israel through the creative power of His promise: "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace" (Rom. 11:5).

The legitimate heirs of the Mosaic and Abrahamic covenants are not the unbelieving natural descendants of Abraham ("Israel after the flesh" [1 Cor. 10:18, K.J.V.]), but exclusively a spiritual Israel, the children of God. "In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring" (Rom. 9:8).

Just as Isaac was born not by the power of man but by the creative power of the gracious promise of God (see Gen. 18:10, 14), so the believing remnant of Israel, as the true people of God in Paul's time, had been brought into existence by the creative word of the preaching of Christ Jesus (see Rom. 10:17). The covenant blessings as a whole are promised, therefore, only to the Christ-believing Israel within the ethnic Israel. After all, if Israel's "root" (chap. 11:16) stands for Abraham, who believed in God when he was a Gentile and was justified before he was circumcised, then there is no ethnic ground or preference for membership in the people of God or remnant of Israel as Paul understood it.<sup>14</sup> The name "Christians" (Acts 11:26) simply means "the Messianic people."

The Israel "of the promise," the new community of faith in Christ, or the

church, is not restricted to believing Jews. Paul states in Romans 9:24 that God called "us," the church of Christ (Messiah), "not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles." He supports this conclusion with an appeal to Hosea 2:23 and 1:10 (see Rom. 9:25, 26), where God made promises of acceptance to the ten apostate tribes of Israel who had virtually become like their heathen captors in the Assyrian exile. Thus Paul explicitly applies the eschatological fulfillment of Hosea's restoration promises for Israel to the church of Christ as a whole, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles.

We conclude that in Romans Paul relates the church and Israel in an unbreakable interrelationship. On the one hand, the church of Christ now occupies the place of unbelieving Israel (the lopped-off branches) and is therefore endowed with Israel's covenant blessings and responsibilities. On the other hand, because God's original redemptive intentions with Israel are irrevocable, the church is called to arouse natural Israel to envy God's mercy to the Gentiles.

<sup>1</sup> C. C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Evangelical Press, 1973), p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> ———, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1954), p. 136.

<sup>3</sup> ———, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> W. D. Davies, "Paul and the People of Israel," *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978), 4-39, states, "We have already suggested that in Romans ix-xi Paul faced an emerging hostile attitude among Gentile Christians toward Jewish Christians and Jews; that is, he faced anti-Judaism. This attitude he rejected."—Page 29.

<sup>7</sup> All Bible texts, unless otherwise specified, are from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul. An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 360.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

<sup>10</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 104; cf. p. 155. (Italics supplied.)

<sup>11</sup> B. Corley, in *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 19:1 (1976), 42-56; quotation is from p. 51, note 44; cf. also G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 539; Ridderbos, *op. cit.*, section 58.

<sup>12</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p. 138.

<sup>13</sup> A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 393, 394.

<sup>14</sup> Miles Bourke, *A Study of the Metaphor of the Olive Tree in Romans XI* (Dissertation of the Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1947), pp. 80-111. Quoted by W. D. Davies (see note 6).

**Paul continues the Old Testament distinction of a spiritual Israel within national Israel. The prophets called this spiritual Israel "the remnant," and it was to be the bearer of God's covenant promises.**



*The busy pastor needs a simple way to evaluate his sermons. These six pointed questions, if applied, will guarantee at least the basic qualifications for a good sermon.*

by James Coffin



## Quality control for sermons

**N**o minister wants to be a boring preacher. No minister likes to think that his parishioners look forward to each of his discourses with a sort of resigned foreboding. No minister wants to admit that his expositions are muddled and hard to follow. But the sad fact remains that such is indeed the case in more instances than we would care to admit.

And this sad state of affairs persists in spite of the fact that many of us have (to our credit) spent no small amount of money and time to acquire and read books on how to improve our sermons. Yet the techniques and suggestions that we anticipated would revolutionize our presentations somehow fall short of our expectations. It is not that the suggestions are not valid. But as busy ministers, we have difficulty remembering—let alone implementing—the myriad do's and don'ts we

encounter in our study of the "how to" books. And because we are busy, our ready-to-deliver sermon is often judged on the single criterion: Is this a "good" sermon?

Such a nonspecific, qualitative analysis may be better than no critical evaluation whatsoever. But it would be far more beneficial if every minister would take the time to establish in his own mind just what are the most significant and the most basic criteria applicable to any sermon, be it doctrinal, devotional, evangelistic, philosophical, expository, or apologetic. This does not ignore the multitude of fine-tuning details whereby any sermon can be significantly improved. But it does guarantee that every sermon will be critically examined to see that it contains at least the basic qualifications of a good sermon. Such a procedure takes relatively little time, but it can do wonders in improving one's sermons.

The criteria by which I attempt to construct and evaluate my own sermons are six simple yet vital questions. I have

divided them evenly into two categories: content and construction. The following three points are the basis upon which I evaluate the content of the sermons I prepare:

1. *Is the sermon Christ-centered?* Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Verse 33 makes it clear that He was speaking of His death on the cross. However, it is no less true that if Christ is lifted up in the pulpit, He will draw men unto Himself. Where Christ is not uplifted, the people will perish for lack of the nourishment and refreshment He alone can provide. Every sermon, whether an Old Testament exposition, a presentation on Christian stewardship, or a prelude to Communion, must be Christ-centered.

To make a sermon Christ-centered does not necessarily mean that we must talk about Christ by name—although we certainly do not talk about Him any too much. Rather, to make a sermon Christ-centered means that it must be a portrayal of God's love in Christ, even if the

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topic is the destruction of sinners, and it must be presented in the context of the salvation that is freely offered in Christ. When Christ is thus brought into every discourse, even the most volatile subjects can be handled in a way that does not antagonize or alienate listeners.

2. *Does the sermon present the "abundant life"?* Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (chap. 10:10). John expressed the hope in one of his epistles that our "joy may be full" (1 John 1:4). In fact, absolutely everything that God asks of us He does so because it is intrinsically superior to the alternatives.

Too often we have told people what they *should* do—do it or face the consequences; do it or else! Such an approach may have worked, or at least appeared to have worked, in the decades and centuries gone by. But it is hopelessly out of touch today. We need sermons today that bring out the beauty of every facet of God's truth. From the joy derived through sharing our means, to the fitness and fulfillment of healthful living, to the symbolism expressed in baptism, all of these are intrinsically beautiful and fulfilling and should be presented as such. The abundant life is a far more effective form of motivation than the fear of being lost. Today's preachers should be the world's best salesmen—not the world's most demanding taskmasters.

3. *Have I personally experienced what I am speaking about?* When told to refrain from preaching or face the consequences, Peter and John stated without equivocation, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). There is something about personal experience that gives the speaker an enthusiasm that cannot be quelled. Both John and Peter emphasize in their Epistles their personal association with Jesus. And until we as preachers can stand in the pulpit and commend to our listeners what we know to be true from personal experience, there will be no authority and little life in our discourses.

To preach from personal experience does not mean, of course, always to be telling personal experiences. Sermons should lift up Christ, not self. Rather, preaching from personal experience means that we will have wrestled with the issues ourselves, that we will have come to the point where the light has shone through, and spurred on by the joy that we have experienced, we will turn to the waiting congregation to share "what we have seen and heard." Every doctrine, every Biblical biography, every exposition, must first have touched the life of the preacher if it is to be preached in such a manner as to touch the life of the hearer.

These, then, are my criteria for judging the content of my sermons. They are simple yet, I feel, essential. But whatever criteria you may develop, as they become

more familiar, they become not only a basis for critical evaluation but also a formula for proper sermon preparation. Before long, sermons quite naturally satisfy the prerequisites laid down.

Yet merely having something of significance to say does not mean that it will automatically come forth in a form that can be easily assimilated by your people. Careful attention must be given to the construction of the sermon. These are the questions I ask of my sermon's form:

1. *Do I have a clearly defined goal, an attention-attracting introduction, and a strong, concise conclusion?* Every sermon should have a clearly defined purpose. The minister is not under obligation to fill a specified time in the worship hour. He is, however, under obligation to feed the flock. He must have a goal, and every aspect of his sermon must be ever moving in the direction of that goal.

Not only must a preacher know where he is going, but he must take his congregation with him right from the start. People usually decide whether a speaker is going to be worth listening to in the first few minutes of his address. Very careful thought should be given to how to introduce the sermon in a way that will capture the imagination and interest of the greatest number of listeners, young and old, members and visitors, committed and uncommitted.

Most important of all is the conclusion. Good preachers spend what may appear to be a totally disproportionate amount of time preparing the last two or three minutes of their sermon. But those preachers know that unless the conclusion is emphatic, concise, and moving, the sermon will have been preached largely in vain. It is often helpful to have the conclusion written out word for word and carefully studied, then when it is presented, certain carefully chosen words and phrases flow forth more freely, stirring the congregation to make the desired response.

2. *Have I chosen a topic that I can adequately handle in a single presentation, and have I discarded all unnecessary baggage?* Mark Twain observed that very few sinners were converted after twelve o'clock! Sermons should be short and to the point. However good the presentation, there is limit to how much the congregation can digest in any one sitting. Some homiletics teachers insist that every minute preached

after twelve o'clock undoes the effectiveness of two minutes preached before twelve; and by the time the speaker has gone ten minutes overtime, he has all but nullified his entire sermon.

Obviously some topics require more time than others. An exposition of some complicated doctrinal passage may require more time than a devotional sermon. But if the preacher, knowing exactly what he wants to say, aims for the target and does not allow himself to be diverted by nonessential details (however interesting), he can cover a great distance in a relatively short time. If the preacher sees that he will still be short of time, even though the sermon is free of unnecessary baggage, he should then probably plan to present the topic as a series rather than as a single unit. And his congregation will be greatly blessed for it—not to mention that they will greatly bless him!

3. *Is the sermon in a logical and easily remembered sequence?* Clear organization on the part of the preacher is a prerequisite to quick assimilation of the details on the part of the listeners. If point A does not naturally and obviously link up with points B and C, few listeners will waste their time unraveling the mystery. Furthermore, that which is carefully structured is likewise more easily remembered both by the preacher and by the listener.

I remember listening to a high school commencement address some eleven years ago, and can to this day remember every point presented. The points were not exceptionally profound, nor was the presentation exceptionally dynamic. The key to my remarkable recall is the clarity of the speaker's organization. He made only three points, but he drove them home so forcefully that they are with me to this day.

As preachers we may not be the world's most profound thinkers. We may not be the world's greatest orators. We may not be able to remember—let alone implement—all the do's and don'ts of proper sermon construction. But if we establish for our sermons a system of quality control, a simple system that can become the working policy of our sermon preparation and the basis of our own critical evaluation, and if we ruthlessly adhere to the criteria we ourselves have deemed essential, our preaching will take on a new tone, our discourses will be given a new power, and hungering, thirsting seekers will be led to Christ where their souls will be satisfied.

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*Every doctrine, every Biblical biography, every exposition, must first have touched the life of the preacher if it is to be preached in such a manner as to touch the life of the hearer.*

We believe that by this faith we are regenerated in newness of life, being by nature subject to sin. . . . This faith not only doth not hinder us from holy living, or turn us from the love of righteousness, but of necessity begetteth in us all good works. Moreover, although God worketh in us for our salvation, and reneweth our hearts, determining us to that which is good, yet we confess that the good works which we do proceed from his Spirit, and can not be accounted to us for justification, neither do they entitle us to the adoption of sons, for we should always be doubting and restless in our hearts, if we did not rest upon the atonement by which Jesus Christ hath acquitted us.—*French Confession, XXII.*

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*This We Believe/4*

*by William G. Johnsson*

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## **Salvation is a gift from God**

**I**t is our conviction that mankind's only hope of salvation is in the unmerited kindness of God. We believe that no human striving, no effort, no works of righteousness that we may do, can win us merit with God. We also believe that God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves and that in Jesus Christ He has broken the reign of sin and death and made salvation accessible to all. By the cross God has reconciled a sinful world to Himself; now He offers to every person His gift of salvation.

If we would grasp the Biblical plan of salvation, we must first realize our desperate need. While at times men and women individually and society generally exhibit noble actions, from a divine perspective we stand condemned, individually and collectively. We are rebels at heart and rebels in deed; even our righteous actions are as "filthy rags" in God's sight (see Isa. 64:6, K.J.V.).\* Although our first parents were created in the divine image, that

image has been defaced: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint" (chap. 1:5, 6). As the searching eye of God surveys the human race, the verdict is: "None is righteous, no, not one." "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:10, 23).

Nor can the law help us. Even if we would seek to justify ourselves before God by a scrupulous conformity to its precepts, we fall short. Jesus, elaborating the law, showed it probes even our motives and attitudes, our secret desires (see Matt. 5:17-48). He showed that at the heart of the law is love—supreme love to God and love of our neighbor as ourself (see chap. 22:34-40). Thus the law demands a standard we cannot reach; rather than saving us, it exposes our insufficiency. "For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20).

We confess that without God we are lost (see Luke 15). We are alienated from God, alienated from one another, alienated from our environment. We do not do what we should or want to do; we do what we

should not do. Not only do we stand wanting at the bar of God, but we are helpless captives to sin, both within and without (see Rom. 7:14-23). As unpalatable to modern people as this description may be, it is nevertheless the Biblical portrayal of the human condition. Only as we sense this lostness, our desperate need of help from outside ourselves, can we appreciate the way of salvation.

For the second great fact of salvation is this: God does not leave us in our lostness. He comes to us, offering His salvation. He does for us what we cannot do. He sets us free—from guilt, from condemnation, from the lordship of sin.

### **God's Initiative**

Throughout the Scriptures God takes the initiative to save men and women. The first question in the Bible that He asks is addressed to our first parents as they hide from Him: "'Where are you?'" (Gen. 3:9). Ever since Adam and Eve's first flight we have been fleeing; ever since God's first call He has been calling. Yahweh intervenes to rescue the Hebrew tribes in

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slavery (see Ex. 3:6-10); He likewise brings them home again from Babylonian exile (see 2 Chron. 36:22, 23).

The supreme act of God, however, is in Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The eternal Word, He who always has been and will be fully God, became flesh, pitching His tent among us (see John 1:1, 2, 14). He did not selfishly grasp to retain His position but took "the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6, 7). One with us, He shared our sorrows, endured our tests, experienced our cares and wants, and was tempted in every respect as we are (see Heb. 2:18; 4:15). Yet in every trial He emerged without sin; He was "a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:19).

### Centrality of the cross

Great as was Christ's life of perfect obedience to the will of God, it pointed forward inevitably to Calvary. To counter the mystery of sin God would provide the mystery of the cross. On Golgotha's hill God would take upon Himself the penalty of our sin, experiencing the desolation and despair of "the second death" (Rev. 21:8). The witness of Scripture is "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). He died the death that was ours that we might receive the life that was His. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

For us the cross is central. It is the decisive moment of history when God showed His judgment on sin and yet provided salvation for the world. We believe in the substitutionary, atoning, reconciling death of Jesus Christ. Because of the cross God can be just and yet the justifier of the man or woman who believes in Jesus (see Rom. 3:21-26). In wonder at the marvel of redeeming love, we exclaim with Paul: "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

At the cross God reconciled the world to Himself. He was not reluctant to save lost humanity; rather, the plan of salvation in Jesus Christ issued from His initiative: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19). Before we made any move toward Him, He had opened the door of deliverance; "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). As we are all "in Adam," the ancestor of the human race, so God designs that we be "in Christ," the second Adam, He whose righteous life and atoning death has reversed the loss of the Fall (see 1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:12-21).

We believe that God's salvation in Christ Jesus is provided for every man and woman, boy and girl, in human history. God has no favorites; He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should

come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, K.J.V.). To every sinner He issues the invitation "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28-30). No distinction of race, sex, age, education, or social status can keep a person from God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. He desires all to be saved (see 1 Tim. 2:4).

While God has made full provision for the salvation of the world, He does not thrust His gift upon men and women. His nature is love, and He longs for a loving response from us—the response of faith. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Faith is trusting God, taking Him at His word, turning from our self-justification to His justification.

But faith itself comes from God. He sends the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11), awakening within us a desire for God. He empowers our will to choose the good: instead of rebelling against God or fleeing from Him, we turn toward Him and His arms outstretched in welcome. The Spirit especially impresses us through the Word of God (see Rom. 10:17). Thus, while even in offering His inestimable Gift God honors our freedom of choice, salvation is entirely from Him. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8, K.J.V.). In the robe of Christ's righteousness worn by the redeemed is not one thread of human devising.

We believe that salvation embraces both objective and subjective aspects. The former denotes our new standing with God, the latter the transformation of our experience.

We believe in justification by grace alone, through faith alone. This historic formula expresses what God does for us in Jesus Christ. It is the good news that by the cross we are acquitted at the bar of divine justice. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. . . . The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5, 6).

While this objective aspect of salvation is effectively expressed through the law-court model of justification, Scripture furnishes other descriptions of our new status. We are forgiven (see 1 John 1:9), redeemed (see 1 Peter 1:18, 19, K.J.V.),

reconciled (see Rom. 5:10), washed (see 1 Cor. 6:11), and adopted as sons and daughters of the living God (see Rom. 8:15). Once we were lost; now we are found. The prodigal has come home (see Luke 15:11-32).

### Salvation transforms

God's gift of salvation does not merely give us a new standing—it is transforming. Turning from self-righteousness to God's righteousness, we are converted (see Isa. 6:10); our attitudes and desires reoriented, we are "born anew" (see John 3:3-8). We are delivered from the kingdom of evil, rescued from the lordship of sin: "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17, 18). Thus, we believe that God's gift of salvation not only works for us but also in us.

As His redeemed sons and daughters, we have a new attitude to divine law. No longer does it stand over against us to condemn us, nor do we seek to win merit by a slavish scrupulosity (see chap. 7:7-11). Rather, the Holy Spirit writes the heavenly precepts on our heart (see Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:10). With our Lord we say, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8, K.J.V.).

It is our conviction that the experience of salvation issues in good works. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10). Such works are not the ground, but the "fruit," of our salvation. As we are united to Jesus, the Vine, our lives will reflect the beauty of His character (see John 15:1-5). Daily beholding His glory, we are being transformed into His image (see 2 Cor. 3:18). Christianity, we believe, is a transforming relationship with a living Saviour and Lord.

Thus, the indicative of God's gift is accompanied by the imperative to holy living. We are to become what we are—to live out the new life that is ours in Christ Jesus (see 1 Cor. 5:7). We dare not treat lightly the "great salvation" that has come to us (Heb. 2:3). The privilege of the divine Gift calls forth a commensurate measure of responsibility; we are to be "blameless and innocent, children of God

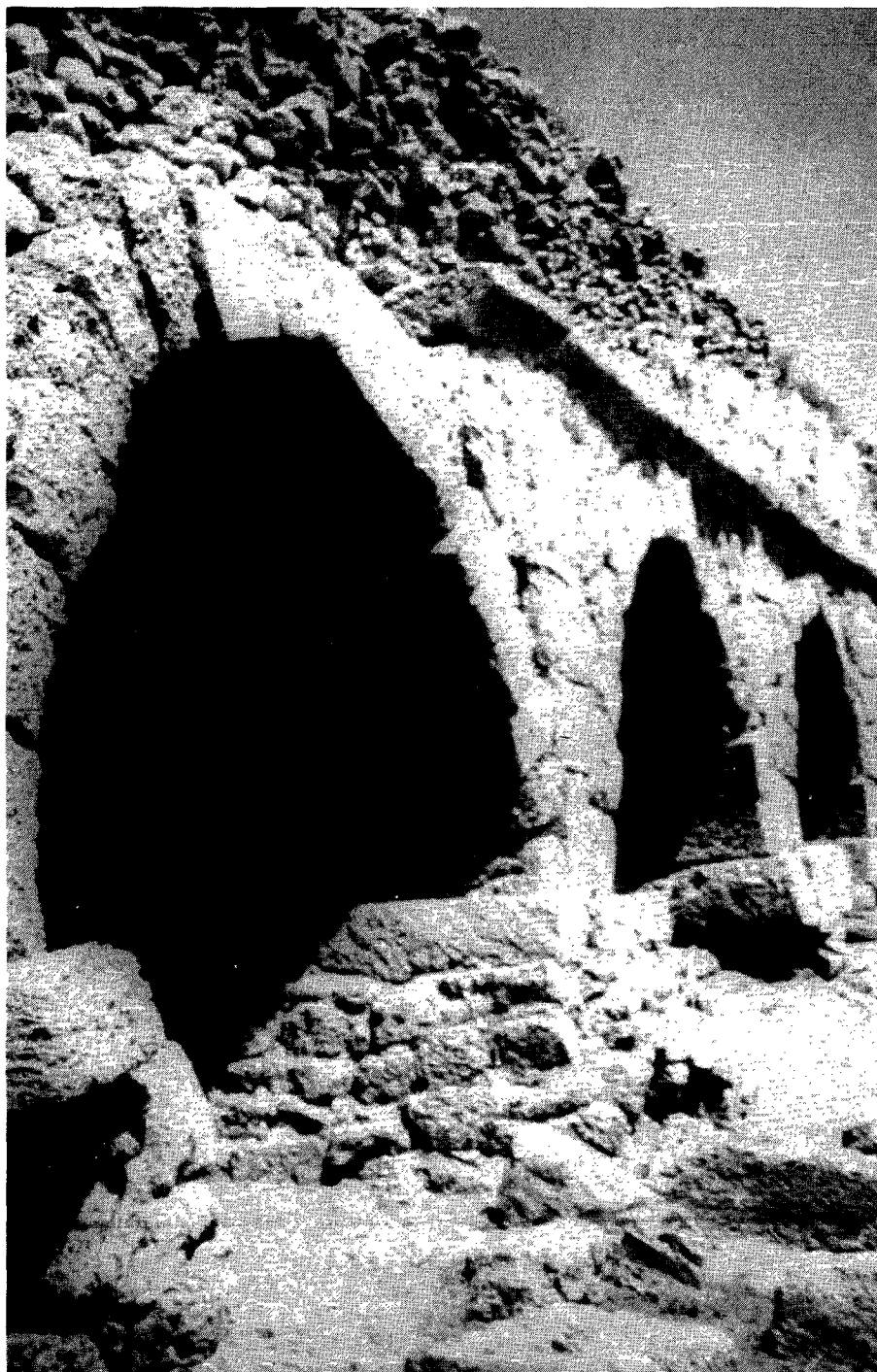
(Continued on page 29.)

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*We believe in justification by grace alone, through faith alone. This historic formula expresses what God does for us in Jesus Christ. It is the good news that by the cross we are acquitted at the bar of divine justice.*

## Caesarea Maritima: Herod's city

*For more than a decade Loma Linda University has cosponsored the excavation of Caesarea, uncovering remains of a large Christian and Roman community. Here's a report by a member of the excavation team.*



The aqueducts of Caesarea brought water to the city along a thirteen-mile causeway.

**S**ituated on the sands skirting the Mediterranean, Caesarea was rebuilt on a grand scale between 22 and 10 B.C. by Herod the Great and served as the capital of the Roman province of Palestine for some sixty years. Its 8,000 acres contained approximately a quarter-million inhabitants, a coliseum with a larger arena than the one in Rome, a seaport, and a hippodrome seating more than 30,000 persons. (This hippodrome was the scene of a slaughter of 20,000 Jews after Rome's conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.) Caesarea boasted a unique, sea-flushed sewer system under the entire city and picturesque aqueducts that provided fresh water from sources thirteen miles away.<sup>1</sup>

For eleven years Loma Linda University has participated in the archeological dig at Caesarea Maritima in Israel, sponsored by the American Schools of Oriental Research and directed by Dr. Robert Bull of Drew University. Fifteen hundred volunteers have contributed to the slow uncovering of this important site. Although only three acres have been unearthed to date, the excavations have shed light on the large community of Christians, Jews, and Romans who have lived in this city and are particularly informative for New Testament students.

The community at Caesarea is rich in Biblical heritage. It was the home of Pontius Pilate, a prefect (later called "procurator") of Judea, and was also the evangelistic district of Philip, one of the seven deacons chosen by the early church (see Acts 6:5). His preaching carried him to Caesarea as one of the "towns" on his evangelistic circuit. Apparently he liked the metropolitan nature of this capital city and stayed twenty years or more to establish a rich Christian community. When the apostle Paul finally visited Jerusalem and passed through Caesarea, Philip was a settled householder with four daughters old enough to be prophetesses (see chaps. 8:40; 21:8, 9).<sup>2</sup> It was in

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Caesarea that Paul's journeys often began, and throughout his ministry he kept in touch with this large city and its growing Christian community numbering perhaps as many as 15,000 by A.D. 66.<sup>3</sup>

As an evangelistic center, Caesarea was ideal because it was at the crossroads of the Roman province and had a beautiful harbor that, according to Josephus, was unique in ancient times. He says that Herod "had blocks of stone let down into twenty fathoms of water, most of them measuring fifty feet in length by nine in depth and ten in breadth, some even larger. . . . [There was a] stone wall encircling the harbor. From this wall arose at intervals massive towers, the loftiest and most magnificent of which was called Drusion, after the step-son of Caesar."<sup>4</sup>

The gospel to the Gentiles was first preached at Caesarea, not by Paul or Philip, but by Peter, according to the Biblical narrative in Acts 10:24-43. In Peter's sermon to Cornelius' household we get a glimpse of the apostolic *kērugma*—the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ, His impartiality in salvation, and the apostles' witness to the plan of God. This sermon culminated in Cornelius' baptism at Caesarea.

The city itself figured prominently in the closing career of Paul as well. For his own safety the apostle was kept there apparently under house arrest in Herod's palace for two years under the procurator Felix (see chap. 23:23-35). Felix' successor, Festus, also left Paul in confinement there.

The city later became a stronghold of the fledgling Christian church. Early bishops of Caesarea had such New Testament names as Zacchaeus, Cornelius, and Theophilus.<sup>5</sup> Two great church leaders held residence at Caesarea—Origen and Eusebius—who later in the Christian Era made the city the center of their academies and scholarly endeavors. Origen spent most of his last twenty years (A.D. 230-250) in Caesarea, where his *magnum opus*, the *Hexapla*, was written.<sup>6</sup> During the early fourth century the bishop of Caesarea was Eusebius, perhaps a native of the city. He served twenty-five years there; and his *Ecclesiastical History*, a survey of church history, is a classic. The libraries of these two early scholars may very well lie in the dust of Caesarea, for they have never been located.

The cosmopolitan nature of this large city is evident from the rather tolerant attitude existing there during the difficult times of the Christian Era. While persecutions often reached other areas (and the persecution of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as already mentioned, was very large), there seems to have been little significant persecution of the early Christian community at Caesarea. There are no records of persecutions in Caesarea in the early years of the Roman decrees (A.D. 202 to 256). Some did occur

during the infamous times of Valerian and Diocletian (A.D. 256 to 305), but even these persecutions seem to be rather minor and sometimes brought on by the martyrs themselves.<sup>7</sup> Thus, despite the horrors caused by persecution in early Christian history, the Caesarean Christian community seems to have survived almost intact.

The excavations themselves have provided us with much information about the city and its history as it relates to Bible times. The discoveries broaden our understanding of the procurators assigned to Judea by the Roman government. Their

seat of power was at Caesarea, and archeology has helped to identify some of them by inscriptions found within the ruins of buildings there. Pontius Pilate's official title was uncovered on a Latin inscription in the amphitheater—a reference to Pontius Pilate, "prefect." This was the title of Roman governors up to the time of Claudius. Later they were known as "procurators." This discovery in the Caesarea theater provided the first secular reference to this Biblical personage.<sup>8</sup>

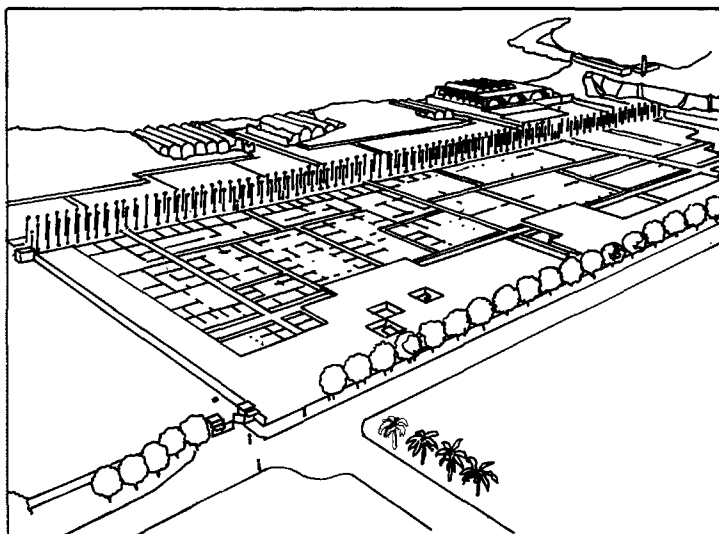
One major project in the excavations is to provide information regarding Cae-



Above: One of the two portraits in the Byzantine pavement is this "Lady in the Street Mosaic." Below: In the floor of the public building this quotation from the book of Romans was unearthed.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR.



Left: What might have been is reproduced by the architect. Note the main street extending 400 meters from the fortress to the theater.  
Right: Excavations of the *cardo* brought the whole excavation team together as pillars and pavement were unearthed.

sarea's city plan. What was the appearance of New Testament Caesarea? Previous excavations uncovered the theater of the city with its commanding view of the harbor area and its coastline. The hippodrome, or sports arena, excavated in the mid-1970s, was the site for early Roman games much like the Olympics and, like them, held every four years. Here Paul could have gleaned his athletic illustrations used in various New Testament letters to the churches. Herod Agrippa I celebrated the opening of this rebuilt city with a great festival of dedication. "For he had announced a contest in music, and athletic exercises, and had prepared a great number of gladiators and wild beasts and also horseraces and the very lavish shows that are to be seen in Rome and various other places."<sup>9</sup> It may well have been at just such a game that Herod was struck down while on a visit to Caesarea.<sup>10</sup>

Excavations in the summers of 1978-1980 confirm the extent of this city on the coast. The dig team found evidence of cross streets (*decumani*), which help to project the number of actual blocks, or *insula*, in the city. One of the main *cardos*, or streets, was discovered that evidently extended from the exit (*vomitorium*) of the theater, along the coast and past the public buildings, to what is possibly the forum. Some 700 large columns, now at rest in the harbor, may have stood at regular intervals along the entire 440-meter length of this beautiful covered walkway. Since the street plan seems to have been built above the Roman one, individuals living in the Byzantine period (A.D. 330-640) no doubt enjoyed its tile roof, columned pillars, and beautiful mosaic pavement. As one walks along the coast today it is still possible to picture the long-vanquished beauty of this Roman city.

Caesarea was rich in mosaics in addition to those that encompassed the main *cardo*; more than fifty others have been excavated. An exciting find in 1980 indicates the richness of the art is still preserved beneath the sand: a calendar adorned with women's

emerging faces and upper torsos attired in seasonal garb. These superbly preserved portraits from the fifth century illustrate the splendor of the Byzantine Christian city.

One of the most intriguing finds, however, relates to the eight or so grain storage vaults (*horea*) that Herod built along the harbor complex in New Testament times. Early in 1973 the excavators discovered there the now-famous Mithraeum, with its marble medallion depicting the god Mithra slaying his bull for sacrifice, thus proving that these vaults were reused by Roman soldiers or even pagan worshipers.

There was excitement in 1979 when the archeological team found in these vaults what has come to be called the "saints' gallery."<sup>11</sup> In 1980 it was my privilege to be involved with a small group in the vault of that gallery and to share the experience of discovery. Entering the storehouse from the top, one slides down an accumulation of debris centuries old to discover a fresco fourteen meters long on the west wall, one of the largest discovered in the Middle East. Its red and black outlines suggest that the artistic project may never have been completed. A thin layer of plaster, Arabic in origin, covered the fresco, perhaps to protect the picture or simply to preserve it for possible reuse at a later time. With dental picks we very carefully removed the plaster and found a Greek inscription and thirteen figures. The central one, larger than the rest, is seated, while the others hold crosses. What appears to be a table is before them. The obvious religious, even

Christian, overtones are striking. Apparently, Christians, as well as the pagans, reused these vaults for their own worship. Although whether this is a Passion supper scene or simply a saintly group is still speculative, the experience is, nevertheless, profoundly moving. Further excavations of these vaults are planned for 1982.

As the city plan emerges and the excavation within these warehouse areas continues, it is probable that the information gained will provide even greater understanding about this large Christian community.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Bull, "Archaeologists Seek Key to the City," *The Archaeology Diary* (Spring, 1980), p. 1. (Published by the Drew Institute of Archaeological Research.)

<sup>2</sup> See Acts 21:8, 9. Also, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3, No. 31, 39. Also, F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: 1952), p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> L. Haefeli, *Caesarea Am Meer* (Munster, Germany: 1923), p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Wars* 1. 26. 6.

<sup>5</sup> C. H. Turner, "The Early Episcopal Lists," *Journal of Theological Studies* (1900), pp. 181-200, 529-553; (1926-1927), pp. 103-134.

<sup>6</sup> Lee Levine, *Caesarea Under Roman Rule* (Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1915), p. 113.

<sup>7</sup> Charles T. Fritsch, ed., *The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975), Vol. 1, pp. 26-28.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday and Company, 1975), pp. 81, 82.

<sup>9</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities* 16. 5. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 12:21-23; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 19. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Bull, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

*The hippodrome, or sports arena, excavated in the mid-1970s, was the site for early Roman games much like the Olympics. Here Paul could have gleaned his athletic illustrations used in various New Testament letters.*



# Is there help for homosexuals?

*While the Christian must maintain a staunch resistance to sin, he must always show love and concern for the sinner. And Christ provides hope not only for the homosexual, but for all of us as sinners!*

**T**he rather lengthy interview and subsequent discussions with Colin Cook on the issues and questions related to homosexuality (see page 4) have been a blessing to me for several reasons. I will mention only two major ones. To begin with, the term *homosexual* was one I used sparingly and almost secretly in my early ministry. To think of the connotations of this word fell under the category of those things covered by Paul's statement, "For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret" (Eph. 5:12, N.I.V.).\* However, my aversion to the practice of homosexuality spilled over into my attitude toward the homosexual person. Discussions with Colin have helped me to understand, and I hope practice more fully, the principle of maintaining a staunch resistance to and hatred for sin, but at the same time showing love and concern for the sinner.

It is impossible, to my mind, to find Biblical approval for those who engage in homosexual activities. Believing that Scripture labels homosexuality a serious offense, I must at the same time acknowledge that fornication, adultery, lying, stealing, hatred, idolatry, and pride are also serious wrongdoings! Any violation of God's commandments is inconsistent with Christian living. Colin has helped me to see more clearly that it is most important to understand that sin in all its varied forms is the result of man's fall, which has produced a thousand varieties of fruits that we label sin. Thus, desires and motives that are alien to the character of God are found residing in the hearts of all. Instead of analyzing and evaluating the relative evilness of sin and impugning the motives of the sinner, it is the minister's business to direct the sinner to the Saviour and demonstrate the triumphant adequacy of grace.

That brings me to the second major blessing I received from this interview. There is marvelous help for all of us sinners! It is found in Jesus Christ and His saving grace. Colin has beautifully testified of his own experience and victory through the majestic doctrine of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. His witness to the freedom and deliverance he found in Christ is, and should be, an encourage-

ment to anyone, regardless of the sins that overwhelm and enslave him.

I recognize that there are many Christians, including ministers, who seriously question the possibility of significant change in human lives, especially in the area of homosexuality. This humanistic position is seemingly becoming more popular. I find it difficult to harmonize this position with scriptural teaching. What was Jesus talking about when He expounded on the new birth experience with Nicodemus? If Nicodemus, of all people, needed changing, what about those who openly and flagrantly rebel against the will of God? What does Paul mean when he speaks of a person becoming a new creature or a new creation? What do the words of Ephesians 2:1-6 (R.S.V.) mean?

"And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Surely Paul is not saying that a person in an unchanged state, "following the desires of body and mind," is now sitting in heavenly places in Jesus Christ! This makes a mockery of the gospel of our Lord. Change is not only possible but is a requirement!

There is one important aspect of the change element that Cook brings out clearly. In my evangelistic endeavors I have witnessed this element frequently. Change in a person's life and habits comes slowly in some cases and quickly in others. I have seen conversion experiences in which an individual not only gives up a wrong habit instantaneously but actually has no more desire to practice it. In other

cases, the individual will obey the call of God but endures a struggle for a period of time before the temptation is weakened and brought under control.

In Colin's case change was not immediate but gradual. Furthermore, in his reference to deliverance, he points out that this does "not necessarily mean the absence of all temptation." I have a friend who struggles with the problem of overeating (by the way, I face a similar problem!) He said to me one day, "Spangler, I have been on a partial fast all my life!" Although this man was a happy Christian and loved the Lord dearly, yet it was a day-by-day battle with his appetite that was in need of constant supervision in order to be restrained.

The central issue is not whether a person will make a total shift from 6 to 0 on the Kinsey scale, as Cook points out, but rather whether a homosexual life style is right or wrong. The issue is faith that obeys the call of God.

Thus "the call to homosexual freedom is grounded in the law of God, not in the possibility of change. The possibility of homosexual freedom is grounded in the cross, which leads to change."

If there ever was a time when the cross of Jesus Christ and the law needed to be lifted high, that time is now. As we look to the cross, the Holy Spirit impresses our minds with the enormously high cost of sin. As we have a love relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, an enmity is created in the heart against evil. Genesis 3:15 becomes a reality in our experience: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel!" (R.S.V.).

Above all, may we as ministers see people through the eyes of Jesus Christ. May we exhibit His mighty power over sin in our own lives. With concern and deep love, let us with the power of the Holy Spirit reach out a helping hand to those who long for deliverance from the prison house of sin.—J. R. S.

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# File me under miscellaneous

*If nothing is filed before something, then would order come before chaos? Or would it be the other way around? The life of this minister's wife may be unpredictable, but at least it's not boring!*

**F**iling class, a required course for a secretarial minor, met on the fourth floor. One afternoon a week I climbed the seventy-four stairs to spend three hours learning to file alphabetically, numeri-

cally, eternally.

I entered the classroom and sat down to a table with a box of cards labeled "Halsey, Patricia." The rest of the afternoon I played in that box moving three-by-five-inch cards from A to Z and back again. I still remember one of the basic rules for filing: "Nothing goes before something." Or is it "Something goes before nothing?"

Patricia Maxwell writes from Turlock, California.



No, I'm sure it's "Nothing before something," because if you have nothing, you put it before "A," and if it's a little bit of nothing, like "AN," it goes before something more, like "AND."

By 5:00 P.M. my fingers would be numb, my eyes crossed, and my brain turned to alphabet soup. I got an A — in the course and vowed to organize my life, but I couldn't decide whether to do it numerically, alphabetically, or by subject.

I still hadn't reached a decision by my senior year, because I needed to find a husband first so I would have something to follow my nothing or nothing after the something of college. Whichever.

That's when I met a theology major in the library. Two dates later, he announced to his roommate, "I'm going to marry that girl." But when he mentioned it to me, I panicked. I needed more time to organize and file my feelings—were they love or infatuation? Within a year, I'd put all my thoughts solidly under LOVE, and we got married with a minimum of preparation because I worked myself to near exhaustion as a dean of girls at a boarding school up to a week before our wedding. We got married anyway, and moved into a basement apartment while he finished college.

Still convinced about the efficiency of filing, I pasted small signs on his bureau drawers that read "Underwear Here," "Socks There," in the hope it would inspire him to throw his clothing in the drawers instead of under the bed. He laughed and kissed me while he kicked his shoes into the closet.

But I stood firm on the issue of having "BABY" come after "COLLEGE" and "SEMINARY." We compromised (or rather, I capitulated), and we put "BABY" between the two (or I should say in the middle of "SEMINARY"), which unfiled our finances and rearranged our lives.

True to the disorganized turn my life had taken, our son arrived three weeks before I'd earned the paycheck earmarked "Layette." While I lay in the hospital worrying about swaddling clothes, my husband and a friend's wife bought a few necessities, and we brought Daniel Scott home and put him in a clothes basket.

Two years and nine months later, I scraped the paint off the secondhand crib

and gave it a new coat of no-lead enamel, but our daughter, Patricia Joanne, came before I got the last leg painted. It remained a bare reminder of my attempts to do things "decently and in order."

Thirteen years have plummeted past, and I'm still scrambling to keep up with life, much less file it. But I continue to try to practice the organizational techniques I learned, and am rewarded with shouts of "Honey, where did you put that book I was reading?"

"What book?"

"You know, the yellow one with the brown lettering."

"What's the name of it?"

"I can't remember."

Or, in fortissimo: "Honey, I can't find my sermon!"

Or: "Where are the tax forms for this year?"

"In the file cabinet."

"Where in the file cabinet?"

"Under 'I' for Income Tax."

"Oh, I was looking under 'T' for 'Tax.' That's the trouble with filing systems. You can't ever find anything."

"Here, let me look for it."

So we bump heads over file drawers, or I lose half his address file, which is an assortment of names and addresses scribbled on everything from funeral programs to paper napkins that I periodically brush into his drawer when I can no longer remember whether the dresser top is walnut or cherry.

In between these clashes of life styles, I try to define the role of a minister's wife so I can order my life thereby, but I get interrupted by such calls as "Could you bring a salad to the church potluck." "The organist isn't here today; could you play?" "Honey, is it all right if I bring Mr. Thrombortner home for lunch in about

fifteen minutes?"

"Who's Mr. Thrombortner?"

"Oh, we just met this morning." And I know by what is *not* said that Mr. Thrombortner is sitting thirty-six inches from the telephone, so I say, "Of course."

And as I whirl through the refrigerator and cupboards praying and looking for a luncheon menu, I forget whether I'd decided a pastor's wife should be a sit-by-the-fire type or an out-on-the-front-line sort. I don't even know whether I've got all my women's rights, much less my sense, or am self-fulfilled or have met all my personal goals as I catapult from one crisis to another. On really bad days I wish I'd married a \$15-an-hour, nine-to-five plumber instead of an always-on-call preacher. But I wouldn't trade the excitement of this unpredictable calling for a thousand evenings of bored togetherness in front of the TV.

## Prayers from the parsonage

Here I am, Lord, asking the same questions others have raised about sending their children to a church day school:

"How can we afford the tuition when we've already been taxed almost \$500 for the local elementary school? I'll have to work harder to save or earn the extra money, which means there'll be less time for the children.

"Is church school worth the bother of one or two—sometimes more—twelve-mile trips a day?" That chunk of our day spent in city traffic is so unnecessary; Lisa could walk to public school five blocks away.

"Really, what could a child possibly learn in first grade at the district school

By Cherry B. Habenicht

that would undermine religious beliefs?" I attended public school through second grade, and Dick received all but two years of his elementary education at the local country school. Neither of us has ever strayed from the church.

"The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6).

Daily Dick and I have prayed with Lisa, teaching her that You are her best friend. Where would she find You, the source of wisdom, in the classes and programs of a secular school system? She is strong-willed and secure in her principles, but might she not be confused by conflicting ideas and peer pressure? During these formative years we want our "home school" to be reinforced, not minimized.

Thank You for a church that emphasizes Christian education. Thank You for consecrated teachers seeking to bring Your love to each discipline.

If there were no church school nearby, we could confidently ask Your blessing on our little girl in a less-than-ideal environment. Instead, Christian education is available, and we ask You to bless our decision to sacrifice in faith.

Tomorrow we'll open those heavy entrance doors, take a place in line, fill out various forms, and put down a \$50 semester fee, as well as one month's tuition. But the archway quotes Your words, "Let the youth come unto Me," and the mural in the hall shows You smiling at the children. What better choice could we make?

## Salvation is a gift from God Continued from page 23

without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

We would make it clear, however, that having begun the Christian life by faith, we do not thereafter rely upon our own strength. The way we receive Christ is also the way we live in Christ: by grace through faith. "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him" (Col. 2:6). Daily we are to give all and receive all—giving ourselves wholly in faith, receiving His new life. We believe in the continuing ministry of the Holy Spirit, He who indwells us as Christ's Paraclete, guiding, strengthening, and encouraging us (see John 14:13, 16-18, 25; Eph. 3:16).

We do not believe that our initial acceptance of God's gift of salvation

ensures that we cannot be lost. Having begun well, we may draw back. God will never forsake us—He will not allow anyone to snatch us out of His hand (see John 10:29)—but we may forsake Him. He does not compel us to remain His, even as He does not compel us to become His. So we take seriously the repeated warnings of Scripture to persevere in the way of God's will, lest we fall from grace (see 1 Cor. 9:26, 27; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31).

This good news of God's gift of salvation lies at the very heart of our self-understanding. We see ourselves commissioned to preach the "eternal gospel" to a world that is facing the imminent end (see Rev. 14:6, 7). In an age of careless living we remind men and women of the claims of God's law that render them condemned

before God and liable to His judgment. But in doing so we would point them to Jesus, He who lived for us and died on our behalf to remove the condemnation and set us free from the power of sin. He is our Brother, our Mediator, our Judge—our Saviour and our Lord!

And the best is yet to be! He who has saved us, whom now we know only by faith, will soon return (see John 14:1-3). Then we shall see Him face to face and abide with Him forever. We shall join in the hallelujah chorus of heaven as we sing: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain" (Rev. 5:12)!

\* Unless otherwise specified, all Bible texts in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

# Reader Service Page

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**Relics of the Past.** Description of the important Biblical artifacts that repose in the major museums of the world. Dr. Siegfried H. Horn, noted archeologist, explains their significance to Bible history and the authenticity of the Scripture text, and tells how and where to find them. 16 pp., \$1.00

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**Archeology/Bible Study Tools.** "What Is New in Biblical Archeology?" by Dr. Siegfried H. Horn, and "Tools and Their Use in the Minister's Workshop," by Dr. Walter F. Specht. Twenty-four-page insert originally included in April, 1980, MINISTRY. \$1.00.

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**The Complete Plan Book for Sunday Eucharistic Celebrations.** The Catholic version of the sermon plan book described above, edited by the Word of God Institute, and fully reflecting the appropriate theology and semantics of the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. \$3.95. (Additional information available.)

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**Sermon Plan Book.** From Advent through the Trinity season, this new workbook provides one planning page for each religious service regularly scheduled during the entire year. Each page serves as a practical outline for drafting future sermons, together with all other aspects of the service. \$3.95. (Descriptive brochure available.)

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**Packet of Four Pamphlets:** "How to Stop Smoking," "If You Smoke," "Alcohol: Ten Reasons Why You Don't Need It," and "Is Marijuana Really All That Bad?" Plus catalog from Narcotics Education, Inc. \$1.00.

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**Life-style Centers.** Information on life-style centers offering health-enhancement programs and treatment of heart disease. Free.

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# Shop talk

*The government may have to cut programs, but MINISTRY won't!  
The 1981-1982 season of MINISTRY professional growth seminars begins  
with the September and October schedule.*

## Good news about professional growth seminars

During the past two and a half years, MINISTRY editors have been pleased to structure 136 one-day professional growth seminars for clergy of all faiths. More than 8,000 have attended these informal continuing-education sessions in which ministers are given the opportunity for study of the Word, for Christian fellowship on a professional level, for developing new tools and techniques of ministry, and for expanding new horizons.

Although we have been uncertain, because of heavy expenses, as to whether a 1982-1983 program would be financially feasible, we have now learned that with some adjustments it will be possible to continue. Normally the seminars are offered without cost to attending clergymen, so we would urge all our readers to attend while the opportunity lasts. It may be that we will have to ask for a fee from each attendee, but the good news is that the seminars definitely will be available during the next two years.

MINISTRY magazine will continue this special "initiative in fellowship"—our outreach to fellow ministers of all faiths to share a common experience in spiritual and professional growth. It is our hope that by this means we all can have a more effective ministry and can be better equipped as servants of our Lord and Saviour.

Following is a list of seminars scheduled for September and October:

September 17	September 21	September 24
Edmonton, AL Douglas Devnich (403) 782-2625	Washington, D.C. Ronald Wisbey (301) 439-8000	Louisville, KY Hugh Leggett (615) 859-1391
September 28	October 1	October 19
Minn./St. Paul, MN Arthur Carlson (612) 545-8894	Wilmington, DE George Digel (301) 995-1910	Moberly, MO James King (515) 223-1197

## N.I.V. Bible sales top 3 million

During January, 1981, sales of *The New International Version Bible* (N.I.V.) exceeded a total of 3 million copies, according to David Hill, of the Zondervan Corporation. *The New International Version* was released late in 1978, and has been gaining steadily in sales and popularity. This translation of the Scriptures into contemporary English from their original languages was undertaken by a team of more than 100 Biblical and English-language scholars. The project was financed by the New York International Bible Society.

The N.I.V. Bible is currently available in a variety of styles, including a new *N.I.V. Pictorial Bible*. This unique concept in Bible publishing will contain more than 500 full-color photos, charts, maps, and background sections to introduce the reader to the historical, geographical, and cultural setting of the Scriptures—all at the point in the text where they will be most helpful.

A reference/concordance Bible is scheduled for publication in 1983, and an N.I.V.

study Bible is being planned for 1984 release. Dr. Kenneth Barker and David Douglass have recently been appointed to head the editorial team that will develop the study Bible.

## MINISTRY wins award

MINISTRY entered the Associated Church Press Award of Merit Contest for the first time this year and came away with top honors in the black and white cover category. The ACP 1980 Award of Merit, presented in Philadelphia on May 9, went to MINISTRY's June, 1980, cover. Illustrating two articles on "How Shall We Work the Cities?" and executed in the form of a neon sign, the cover concept was developed by MINISTRY's designer, Helcio Deslandes and painted by Louis A. Janesko, a free-lance artist.



# Letters

Continued

such things as submission, healing, and faith that will move mountains. He wants us to seek everything the Bible says about such subjects and not narrow in on one text that could easily be made to be somebody's "problem text."—Robert Cochran, Washington.

## Live preachers needed

Television should not be made the whipping boy for dull sermons ("Why Johnny Can't Listen to the Sermon," May, 1981). Like many other things, TV is a great competitor to the pulpit. But I have

yet to attend a church service in which the awful and living truths of God's Word were preached not as fiction but as truth, without observing that those in attendance, including the children, listened with some degree of attention. I have also been bored again and again by trite, pointless, spiritless discourses that were time-consuming but had little light, power, or information. Give us ministers who are alive, who have studied until they are full of their message, and under divine constraint speak out what God has breathed in!—Cecil Guyot, Dayton, Tennessee.

## Aloha from Hawaii

It seems to have taken us a long time to get around to it, but we do want to thank you for the subscription to MINISTRY. Between the two of us, we always find several articles of interest, help, and stimulation. The best thing about it is not receiving it free, but the fact that you send it as a ministry. That's not only a terrific idea but it seems to us to embody the whole concept of the gospel. Again, many thanks, and Aloha, nui loa!—Pastors Alice and David Babin, Kealahue, Hawaii.

# Recommended reading

*These books approach human sexuality and homosexuality from the viewpoint of clinicians, counselors, and theologians. All are in print and will provide the reader with a broad basis for understanding.*

**The Bond That Breaks: Will Homosexuality Split the Church?**  
Don Williams, Regal, 1978, \$4.95, paper.

**The Broken Image**  
Leanne Payne, Cornerstone Books, 1980, \$4.95, paper.

**Changing Homosexuality in the Male**  
Lawrence Hatterer, McGraw-Hill, 1970.

**A Christian View of Homosexuality**  
John Drakeford, Broadman Press, 1977, \$2.95, paper.

**The Church and Homosexuality—a Positive Answer to the Current Debate**  
Michale Green, David Holloway, David Watson, Hodder and Stoughton, 1980

**The Church's Responsibility to Homosexual Persons**  
Karatana, Inc., 1978.

**Forgiven Love**  
Barbara Tramp, Jeremy Books, 1979, \$2.25, paper.

**The Gay Theology**  
Kent Philpott, Logos Int., 1977, \$2.50, paper.

**The Goals of Human Sexuality**  
Irving Singer, Schocken, 1974, \$2.25, paper.

**The Gospel and the Gay**  
Kenneth Gangel, Thomas Nelson, 1978, 200 pages, \$3.95.

**The H Persuasion: How Persons Have Permanently Changed From Homosexuality Through the Study of Aesthetic Realism With Eli Siegel**  
Sheldon Kranz, ed., Definition Press, New York, 1971, \$4.95/2.50.

**Healing of Persons**  
Paul Tournier, Harper and Row, 1965, \$8.95.

**Homosexual Crisis in the Mainline Church: A Presbyterian Minister Speaks Out**  
Jerry R. Kirk, Thomas Nelson, 1978, \$3.95, paper.

**The Homosexual Way: A Christian Option?**  
David Field, InterVarsity Press, 1979, \$1.95, paper.

**Homosexuality: A Biblical View**  
Greg L. Bahnsen, Baker, 1978, \$4.95.

**Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study**  
Irving Bieber, Basic Books, 1962, \$17.00.

**Homosexuality: A Symbolic Confusion, 2d ed.**  
Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse, Seabury, 1979, \$4.95, paper.

**Homosexuality and the Christian Faith**  
Harold L. Twiss, ed., Judson, 1978, \$3.95, paper.

**Homosexuality and the Church**  
Richard Lovelace, Revel, 1978, \$6.95.

**Homosexuality in Perspective**  
William H. Masters and Virginia Johnson, Little, 1979, \$19.95.

**Male and Female: Christian Approaches to Sexuality**  
Ruth T. Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes, Seabury, 1976, \$4.95, paper.

**The Moral Teaching of Paul**  
Victor Furnish, Abingdon Press, 1979, \$4.95, paper.

**Out of the Closet—Into the Light**  
Michael Munger, Pacific Press, 1980, \$3.50

**The Returns of Love: A Christian View of Homosexuality**  
Alex Davidson, InterVarsity Press, 1977, \$2.50, paper.

**Sexuality and Homosexuality: A New View**  
Arno Karlen, Norton, 1971, \$15.00.

**Such Were Some of You**  
Kevin Linehan, Herald Press, 1979, \$5.95, paper.

**The Ten Commandments for Today**  
William Barclay, Harper & Row, 1977, 208 pages, \$7.95.

**Theology and Ethics of Sex**  
Sakae Kubo, Review and Herald, 1980, \$4.95.

**The Third Sex?**  
Kent Philpott, Logos, 1975, \$2.50, paper.

**To Understand Each Other**  
Paul Tournier, John Knox, 1967, \$3.50; 1976, \$1.25, paper.

**The Undiscovered Self**  
C. G. Jung, Little, 1958, \$2.95; New American Library, Menter Books, 1974, \$1.25.

**Whatever Became of Sin?**  
Karl Menniger, Dutton, 1973, \$8.95/ \$4.95; Bantam, 1978, \$2.50, paper.

**What You Should Know About Homosexuality**  
Charles Keysor, ed., Zondervan, 1979, \$4.95, paper.

**When You Are Concerned With Homosexuality**  
Alfred Messer, Abbey Press, 96 pages, \$1.95, paper.

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