

The Reformation Herald

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"In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faithful testimony to the generation in which they lived.

These sentinels gave the message of warning; and when they were called to lay off their armor, others took up the work.

God brought these witnesses into covenant relation with Himself, uniting the church on earth with the church in heaven. He has sent forth His angels to minister to His church, and the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against His people."

—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 11.

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"The age in which we live calls for
reformatory action."

—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 488.

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Christ Our Righteousness

Humanity's greatest problem is sin and the sense of guilt that comes with it. Nothing burdens the heart so heavily and troubles the mind so much as sin and guilt.

Most physical and mental illnesses have their origin right here, and people are ready to pay almost any price in their search for peace of mind. This is why so many go to counselors, clergymen and psychiatrists to try to unload their hearts of this terrible burden. In some Christian and non-Christian circles, hundreds of thousands participate in pilgrimages, make physical sacrifices of inflicting punishment upon themselves, and perform acts of penitence, hoping to solve the great problem. But it is all worthless for salvation or for actually restoring peace of mind to their life. The only remedy for sin and sinfulness is coming to Jesus and looking unto Him.

It is not possible for us, by our own efforts, to escape from the pit of sin in which we find ourselves. Our heart is wicked, and we cannot change it. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4). "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

Many try to obtain peace by their own merits or by their own supposed greatness. What a pity! The apostle Paul declares: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the

law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:8, 9).

"My own righteousness" is one form of righteousness. The "righteousness of God" through faith in Christ is another. That is righteousness by "works" versus righteousness by "faith." To try to obtain salvation by any kind of human effort or by any trust in human works or merit is absolutely useless. Salvation is obtained by grace, the grace of God, and is a result of appropriating the merits of Christ by faith in Him, which includes surrender to Him.

"We may measure ourselves by ourselves, we may compare ourselves among ourselves, we may say we do as well as this one or that one, but the question to which the judgment will call for an answer is, and do we meet the claims of high heaven? Do we reach the divine standard? Are our hearts in harmony with the God of heaven?"

"The human family have all transgressed the law of God, and as transgressors of the law, man is hopelessly ruined; for he is the enemy of God, without strength to do any good thing."¹

When we accept Jesus as our personal Saviour and exercise faith in Him, we receive instant reconciliation with God. We are forgiven, accounted perfect; and before God it is as if we had never sinned. But that is not all. God wants to make us partakers of the divine nature. He wants to restore His image in us. He is willing to impart to us His perfect character. This along with His imputed righteousness is the white garment with which He has promised to clothe us.

"No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct."²

Christ has set a high standard for every believing Christian in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The idea of perfection in the original language is to "be mature, grown up."

Yet we must **remain** connected with God. Otherwise we can never resist the effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and enticement to sin. Without a constant surrender of ourselves to Christ we are soon overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ and a continual communion with Him, we would be at the mercy of the enemy.

As we cooperate with Christ, gaining victory over self through His strength, we become witnesses of His divine power. We share with others what we know, what we have seen, heard and felt of Christ's love. The redeemed overcome "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

And soon, by God's grace, "when the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."³

As we commence this New Year, may this be our thought and prayer. **R**

References

¹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 321.

² *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 555, 556.

³ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

BEWARE

Not All That Glitters Is Gold

BY A. BALBACH

In informal English, a gold brick is something represented as valuable, something that looks good at first, but turns out to be worthless. Of course, no one wants to be a victim of goldbricking. Nevertheless, wherever you turn, you will hardly meet a person who can honestly say, "I have never been fooled or tricked." Can you say that?

Not only naïve people, but also smart fellows, often fall prey to some of the many forms of deception practiced in the world. Therefore, it is wise to take all possible precautions against the existing danger.

A teller in a bank was thinking about this very problem while examining a counterfeit banknote. His boss came to him and surprised him with the question:

"What are you doing?"

"I'm carefully looking at this counterfeit bill, so I won't be deceived again and again," he said.

"That is not the proper way to develop your ability to distinguish false bills from genuine bills," the boss replied. "Counterfeit banknotes will appear in many forms. By identifying one, you will not necessarily be able to detect the others. What you need in the first place is to become well acquainted with the authentic stuff, the true money, and then you will have no doubt when you see bogus money."

Unfortunately, the good advice of the bank manager is ignored in



practically all the domains of our existence on earth. Therefore, according to Henry Mackenzie, "mankind, in the gross, is a gaping monster, that loves to be deceived, and has seldom been disappointed." Yes, the human race accepts deception as a way of life. Worse than that, not being satisfied when deceived by others, human beings also like to deceive themselves.

In this short dissertation, I'm addressing those who want to be good to themselves, those who love their own soul, those who are sensible enough to choose that which will be beneficial to them and reject that which would hurt them one way or another. The following advice fits in with the thinking of reasonable people, whom I wish to reach:

"Test everything; hold fast what is good." 1 Thessalonians 5:21 (RSV).

Let us be very cautious: Before we can act on the counsel of the apostle Paul, we must adopt the wise principle recommended by the bank manager. In the first place we ought to know what is genuine, authentic, or real, if we actually want to be free from deception. Christ admonishes us:

"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:32 (RSV).

When Jesus stood on trial before Pilate, the Roman governor asked Him, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), but turned away without giving Him a chance to reply. Honest and sober-minded people will never act that way. The question of the Roman governor can often be heard also today, and the answer is found in the Bible: Jesus Christ is the truth (John 14:6), the law of God is the truth (Psalm 119:142; Malachi 2:6; Isaiah 8:16, 20); and the word of God is the truth (John 17:17). It is not my purpose, here, to enter into details on this question. I only want to draw the attention of the readers to a great danger. In order to make it very difficult for people to discern the difference between truth and error, Satan has invented many forms of sophistic reasoning and a number of mind-control techniques, which his servants have been using with a measure of success.

Let us be warned against Satan's methods, which can be summarized as follows:

1. *Satan will influence his agents to appeal to right principles in order to falsely criticize your actions. Examples:*

- a) When the people of Israel were about to leave Egypt, Pharaoh wanted to give the impression that he was considerate of the safety of the little children and the women. So he said he would only allow the men to go and serve the Lord beyond the borders of Egypt. Exodus 10:7–11. In reality, Pharaoh only wanted to be sure that the men would come back. He had no concern for the little ones and the women.
- b) The scribes and Pharisees pretended to have a high regard for the law of Moses when they dragged before Jesus a woman accused of committing adultery. And they wanted to know from Him whether or not she should be stoned according to the law. John 8:3–11. Actually, they did not care about the law of Moses; they only wanted to set a trap for Jesus.
- c) Under the semblance of concern for the poor, Judas criticized the action of Mary Magdalene. “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?” he asked. “This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.” John 12:5, 6.

2. *Satan takes right and positive words, or sentences, or verses, and gives them a wrong definition or puts them to a wrong use. Examples:*

- a) You may have heard this sophistry: “God is immortal. Man was made in the image of God. Therefore, man is immortal.”
- b) This was advocated by a man who started a new religion in Brazil: “Christ said, ‘Love your enemies.’ Satan is my enemy. Therefore, I must love my brother Satan.”
- c) The great deceiver used the word of God when he spoke to Jesus: “It is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou

dash thy foot against a stone.” But Satan misapplied this precious promise when he suggested to Jesus: Therefore, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence.” Luke 4:9–11.

- d) Christ said to His followers, “I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:20. And the apostle Paul wrote: “Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.” Romans

(Isaiah 58:9, last part; Revelation 12:10). When they are rebuked because of their subversive activity (2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Timothy 6:3–5; Jude 4, 16, 18; 2 Peter 2:10), they will say that they have been called to break every yoke (Isaiah 58:6).

- c) Sometimes you must be quite frank with somebody; otherwise they will not understand you. But then they will say that you have

Satan has invented many forms of sophistic reasoning and a number of mind-control techniques, which his servants have been using with a measure of success.

11:1. Satan knows how to practice deception with these verses. He influences hundreds of churches to misappropriate these promises, unconditionally, for themselves. They ignore the basic conditions on which these promises may be claimed. 2 Chronicles 15:2; 2 John 9.

- e) A man who started a new religion in South America taught: “Abraham, our father in the faith (Galatians 3:7), was a polygamist (Genesis 25:6). I follow his example (John 8:39).

3. *Satan changes the terminology, causing certain words to assume a different meaning in the minds of the unwary. Examples:*

- a) If we preach a message of reformation as required by the Lord (Isaiah 58:1), some will shout at us: “Stop all criticism.”
- b) When the church must correct disorderly members (Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Corinthians 5:11–13; James 5:19, 20), and when their misbehavior is pointed out (Luke 17:3), they will say that it is wrong to be an accuser of the brethren

abused them with your tongue. And when you have to listen to an undeserved tongue-lashing from them, they will say that they did not use abusive language; they only tried to be frank with you.

- d) You may have to disagree with a brother or sister, or even with some of the leaders, when you see that they are trying to force their wrong ideas upon you, or upon the committee, or upon the whole field or union conference. If they cannot push matters through in their own way because of your opposition, they may wrongly accuse you. “You are not converted,” they may say, “since you are not cooperative; you are destroying the spirit of unity in the church.” In their way of thinking and acting, the words “conversion,” “cooperation,” and “unity” imply the idea that you must be in full agreement with them, no matter whether they are right or wrong.

4. *Satan makes your motives subject to the judgment of others, as though they were competent to define your inten-*

tions. They misinterpret the reasons for your actions as a pretext to accuse you so that, through their accusation, they may reach their own aims. Examples:

a) While Daniel was one of the three presidents set over the Medo-Persian kingdom, the other two presidents induced King Darius to sign a decree apparently for the purpose of protecting the king against a plot. Actually, however, they purposed to destroy Daniel by finding a pretext to falsely accuse him in order to promote their own ambitious aims. Read Daniel 6:1–23.

b) The Jews in Medo-Persia, under Ahasuerus, who reigned from India to Ethiopia, were free to live a peaceful life and practice their religion without opposition, until Haman denounced them to the king. He said:

“There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king’s laws, so that it is not for the king’s profit to tolerate them.” Esther 3:8 (RSV).

Haman added: “Let it be decreed that they be destroyed” (verse 9), not because he was interested in the security and prosperity of King Ahasuerus and his dominion, but because he

hated them and wanted to get rid of them.

c) The Jewish leaders falsely accused Christ on political grounds, saying that He wanted to become a king, which would put the throne of Caesar in danger. John 19:12, 15. In reality, they were not interested in the security of the Roman emperor; they hated him and his domination. They wanted to put Jesus to death because they were not prepared to accept Him as the promised Messiah, though they were not able to refute the evidence of His Messiahship. John 10:37, 38; 11:43–53; 14:11.

5. Under the guidance of Satan, men will make wrong comparisons, putting mosquitoes and camels on the same level.

Nay, they will go farther than that. They will look at their own mistakes through a reduction glass and at your mistakes through a magnifying glass. Thus, they will see a molehill where there is a mountain, and a mountain where there is a molehill.

The rebuke of Jesus applies to people who speak and act under this kind of deception: “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” Matthew 7:3 (RSV).

6. People get brainwashed when error is repeatedly blown into their ears and minds for a long period of time.

It has been said: “Repeat a lie many times over and it will finally be accepted as truth, and you yourself will believe it.”

7. Some people use a vicious inductive method of reasoning by drawing wrong conclusions from a few, insufficient facts.

Someone may talk like this: “My boss professes to be a Christian and he is a crook. My neighbor says he is a Christian and he is a crook. My brother-in-law claims to be a Christian and he is a crook. Therefore, all Christians are crooks.”

8. Others use a faulty deductive method of reasoning by drawing wrong conclu-

sions from general principles or facts when applied to particular cases.

Example: A Cretan prophet said: “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” Titus 1:12 (RSV). “My neighbor is a Cretan. Therefore, he is a liar and so forth.”

9. There are those who think they can prove their point through a subtle “conversion” (or transposition) of subject and predicate in a proposition. Examples:

“All those that honor father and mother live longer” (Exodus 20:12).

“All those that live longer are the ones that honor father and mother.”

“All good Christians are happy.”

“All happy people are good Christians.”

“All men are living beings.”

“All living beings are men.”

Have you noticed the deceptive reasoning?

10. In the presence of irrefutable evidence, some people try to quickly switch the discussion by jumping from one point to another, in order to evade difficult questions or undeniable facts (Luke 10:25–29; John 9:24–34).

People also practice deception by using half-truths (Genesis 20:9–12), overstatements (Numbers 13:32, 33), flattery (Acts 24:1–3), and duplicity. Duplicity is a form of dissimulation which consists in pretending one thing and intending to do another thing, or the practice of publicly acting one way and secretly acting another way in order to deceive. For examples of duplicity, read 1 Samuel 28:1, 2 and Matthew 2:1–8, 13.

“Men think they are representing the justice of God. . . . Their human invention, originating with the specious devices of Satan, appears fair enough to the blinded eyes of men. . . . A lie, believed, practiced, becomes a truth to them. . . . We are warned in the word of God that sleepless vigilance is the price of safety. Only in the straight path of truth and righteousness can we escape the tempter’s power.”¹ **R**

References

¹ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 363–366.



Understanding the Investigative Judgment

BY LES GIBSON

We hear about a judgment, to see if we are good enough to go to heaven. Now, most people say they want to go to heaven, so let's decide to investigate and get the facts. In Ecclesiastes 12:14 we read, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

The apostle Paul spoke to Felix and his wife about his faith in Christ and of a judgment still to come (in his day, still future. See Acts 24:24, 25).

THE SANCTUARY

The Old and New Testaments both agree there will be a judgment. To understand this better we need to examine the sanctuary service. In approximately 555 B.C., God revealed to the prophet Daniel that "the sanctuary" would be cleansed. "And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Daniel 8:14). "Then" points to a future event. The prophecy reaches 2,300 years into the future.

In Exodus 25:9, 40, God explained to Moses that the sanctuary he was to build was to be according to the pattern of the one in heaven (see Hebrews 8:5).

In the beginning, there was no Bible. God spoke with Adam and Eve face to face. See Genesis, chapters 1 and 2. In the earth made new there will be no need of a Bible, for the same reason (see Revelation chapters 21 and 22).

After sin came into the picture, separating the human race from

their Maker, the Lord still desired to be in communion with His people, so He made provision to make reconciliation possible through the sacrifice of His own Son. A plan of atonement for sin was established. This plan had actually been conceived even before the Fall, and it will continue until the work of redemption is complete. "The whole world needs to be instructed in the oracles of God, to understand the object of the atonement, the at-one-ment, with God."¹

The procedure of this plan of atonement was exemplified in the sanctuary service, as explained in Leviticus 16:29–34.

The day of atonement was to be observed by the children of Israel once a year. It prefigured the great day of atonement that was to occur near the close of earth's history illustrated by the cleansing of the sanctuary foretold in Daniel 8:13, 14. The Old Testament sanctuary was but a figure of the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:6–12). Jesus Christ is our great High Priest officiating for us in the heavenly sanctuary, which the Lord pitched and not man (Hebrews 8:1, 2). In the sanctuary service of the Old Testament, the high priest officiated once a year for the atonement of the sins of the people. This was a symbol prefiguring the work to be performed by our high priest, Christ Jesus, in the sanctuary above.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1).

For the children of Israel the service of the sanctuary culminated

each year on Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1–34; and 23:27–32). This was the most solemn day of the year to the Hebrews. It was a day of judgment and of reconciliation. Those who had with repentant heart afflicted their soul had their sins blotted out on this day.

They stood before God with a clean record, while those who refused to repent were cut off (Isaiah 44:22 and Leviticus 23:29).

FORGIVEN OR UNFORGIVEN

Conditional forgiveness is taught in the parable of the ungrateful servant. In Matthew 18:23–35 we find this story. "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and

cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”

The man in the story was forgiven a huge debt (10,000 talents). The average working man could not pay such a big debt if he lived ten lifetimes, but the king forgave him. Though he was forgiven a huge debt, he wouldn't forgive a fellow employee a small debt of \$15.00 But wait a

minute. Look at verses 32–34. The hard-hearted man is thrown in jail for his huge debt! Why? He was just forgiven conditionally. But his debt was not cancelled. The Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9–13) teaches us that if we do not have the forgiving spirit of God, then our sins cannot be blotted out. This man's sins had been forgiven, but not blotted out. He had not “afflicted his soul” and searched out his sins in the day of atonement. “For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people” (Leviticus 23:29). In Romans 8:9, last part, we read: “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” This man did not have the forgiving spirit of Christ (the king in our story. See Matthew 18:33, 34).

THE NET

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:47–50).

“The casting of the net is the preaching of the gospel.”²

“The gospel net gathers both good and bad. It takes time for character to be developed.”³

“When the mission of the gospel is completed, the judgment will accomplish the work of separation.”⁴

NO GARMENT

This same concept of separation is brought to view in the parable of the man without a wedding garment—Matthew 22:2–14: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.”

“By the king's examination of the guests at the feast is represented a work of judgment. The guests at



BIBLE ART

the gospel feast are those who profess to serve God, those whose names are written in the book of life. But not all who profess to be Christians are true disciples. Before the final reward is given, it must be decided who are fitted to share the inheritance of the righteous. This decision must be made prior to the second coming of Christ.”⁵

In Revelation 19:7, 8 the wedding robe is the righteousness of the saints. It represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding. Since our righteousness is compared to filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), we must allow the Lord to cover us with His robe of righteousness. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10). The man in this parable had to be expelled because he refused to let go of his citizen’s dress. His sin made the separation necessary.

THE LACK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

This concept of separation is again brought out in the parable of the ten virgins found in Matthew 25:1–13. ALL had lamps. The lamps represent the Bible (see Psalm 119:105). ALL slumbered and slept. ALL were awakened by the midnight cry and trimmed their lamps (increased Bible study), but the five foolish ones did not have enough oil. This lack the five wise ones could not supply (Matthew 25:8, 9). The oil represents the Holy Spirit (see Zechariah 4:1–6).

The ten virgins were waiting for the return of the Lord from the wedding (Luke 12:36). They had been invited to the marriage feast, the reception. But the five foolish virgins were destitute of the Holy Spirit.

“Unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will

not be transformed.”⁶ They learned too late that “character is not transferable.”⁷ “It is in a crisis that character is revealed.”⁸

The robe of Christ’s righteousness can be put on only with the aid of the Holy Spirit, as our character is changed from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18) from the “old man of sin” into the similitude of the character of Christ (Colossians 1:27). This is the result of the new birth experience spoken of in John 3:3–8.

Perfection in Christ through His imputed and imparted righteousness! This is what will enable us to stand in the judgment.

PRECIOUS GRAIN OR WORTHLESS WEEDS?

In the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24–30), the workers recognized the tares, but they were not allowed to gather them up, for their roots would get entangled with those of the wheat. God does not leave with men the task of judging character.

“The Lord knoweth them that are his” (2 Timothy 2:19).

WHAT IS ON THE TEST?

“He who becomes a partaker of the divine nature will be in harmony with God’s great standard of righteousness, His holy law. This is the rule by which God measures the actions of men. This will be the test of character in the judgment.”⁹ “The only question asked in the judgment will be, ‘Have they been obedient to My commandments?’”¹⁰

Remember my friend the final exams in school? How you wanted to know the questions beforehand! Well, God wants everyone to pass the test. So, He has revealed to us the test question. Those who pass the final exam are the victorious ones who stand on the sea of glass (Revelation 15:2). But what about those who fail the test? The answer is in Revelation 20:14, 15.

CONCLUSION

We started our study with Ecclesiastes 12:14. That verse told us

there is to be a judgment of every secret thing. We are bidden by the previous verse, Ecclesiastes 12:13, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” The ten commandments apply to all human beings at all times, in times of peace and prosperity, in troublous times, even in times of war.

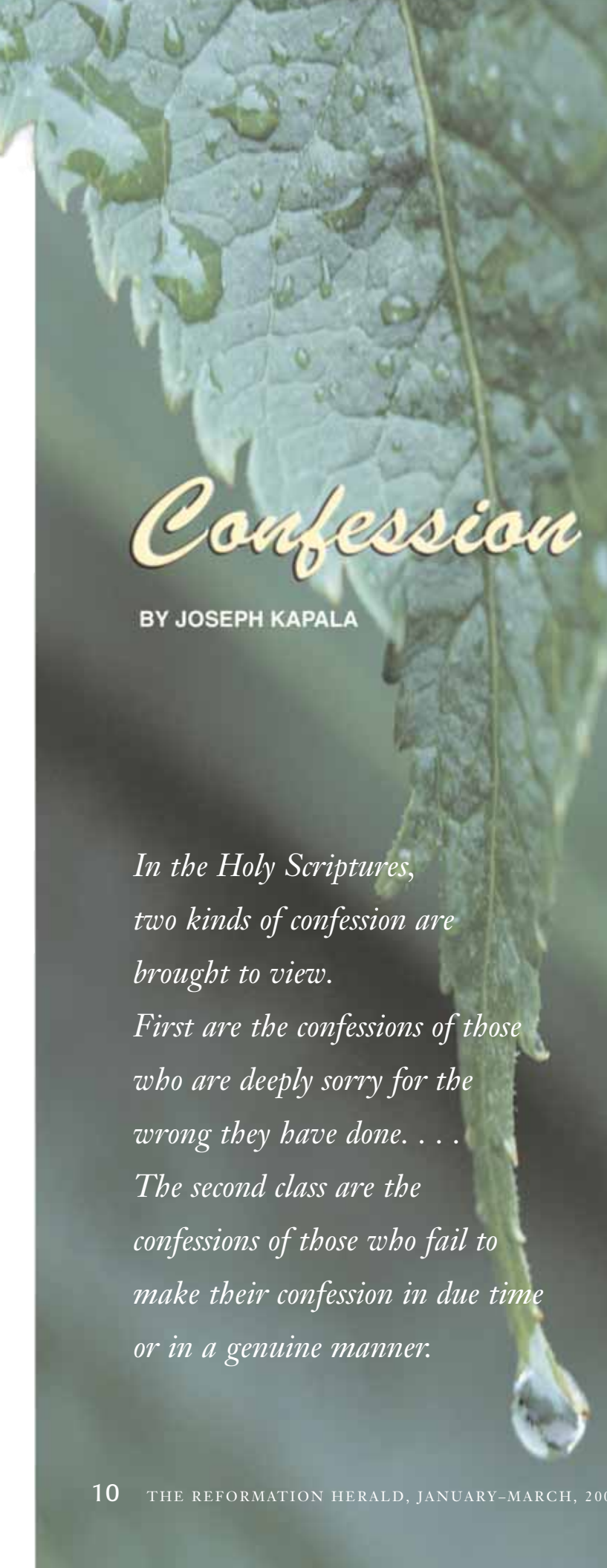
“Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now. Never was any previous generation called to meet issues so momentous; never before were young men and young women confronted by perils so great as confront them today.”¹¹

God was at one time “at-one” with man. God will again “at-one” time be “at-one” with man! He has made this atonement (this at-one-ment) possible by the blood of His own dear Son “Men may comprehend the spirituality of the law, they may realize its power as a detector of sin, but they are helpless to withstand Satan’s power and deceptions, unless they accept the atonement provided for them in the remedial sacrifice of Christ, who is our Atonement—our At-one-ment—with God.”¹²

Will you be found blameless before God? Will you send your sins beforehand to judgment? (1 Timothy 5:24, 25). Will you “afflict your soul” today? Will you by searching find out your secret sins, and ask for forgiveness with a contrite heart? The examination is final! The results are sure! The choice is yours! **R**

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Confession

BY JOSEPH KAPALA

*In the Holy Scriptures,
two kinds of confession are
brought to view.*

*First are the confessions of those
who are deeply sorry for the
wrong they have done. . . .*

*The second class are the
confessions of those who fail to
make their confession in due time
or in a genuine manner.*

Those who desire to be reconciled with God and have the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins have but one path to take: The way of confession.

True confession is the condition upon which forgiveness is given and mercy extended.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psalm 32:1, 2). The words of this entire psalm beautifully express the blessed state of the soul who has been restored into the family of God.

It is part of our very nature to excuse and justify our wrongdoing and to put the responsibility upon others. We are not always ready to admit our offenses, mistakes, errors or ask to be forgiven. Though we may profess to be Christians, nearly every time we try to justify ourselves. The whole history of the human race testifies to this human frailty. When sin first entered this fair earth, our first parents came under the power of Satan and his character was imparted to them. First he led them into sin, and then as a consequence of their fall, their judgment was perverted and they started to excuse their transgression. Adam said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” Likewise the woman said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Genesis 3:12, 13).

By controlling their minds, Satan used both the man and the woman to express his own sentiments. His purpose was to imply God as being responsible for the entrance of evil. In the excuse Adam gave, he blamed God for giving him the woman, while she in turn sought to wash her hands of the responsibility and put the blame on the serpent. Then the whole reproach was supposedly to come back upon God who had made the serpent.

You will notice that this weakness is deeply rooted in the heart of both old and young. Whenever a mistake is made and is brought to notice, instead of humbly apologizing, the mind immediately turns to formulating an excuse and justifying the wrong. Many are compelled to admit their wrong in the face of the evidence presented and they offer a kind of apology, but this is not true sorrow for sin; often it only prepares the way for further deception. The Bible plainly teaches how only a sinner can be benefited from his confession: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

Many parents excuse their own sins and those of their children, but in so doing they will not prosper or obtain mercy. So long as pride stands in the way, it is

impossible for a prompt or genuine confession to be made. And so long as we delay, we add sin to sin and thus depart further and further away from God. From his own experience, the psalmist David expresses what is the condition of many who delay to perform their duty.

“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:3–5).

The Lord’s messenger for our time was impressed to plead: “What shall I say to arouse the remnant people of God? I was shown that dreadful scenes are before us; Satan and his angels are bringing all their powers to bear upon God’s people. He knows that if they sleep a little longer he is sure of them, for their destruction is certain. I warn all who profess the name of Christ to closely examine themselves and make full and thorough confession of all their wrongs, that they may go beforehand to judgment, and that the recording angel may write pardon opposite their names. My brother, my sister, if these precious moments of mercy are not improved, you will be left without excuse. If you make no special effort to arouse, if you will not manifest zeal in repenting, these golden moments will soon pass, and you will be weighed in the balance and found wanting. Then your agonizing cries will be of no avail. Then will apply the words of the Lord: ‘Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish

cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil’ (Proverbs 1:24–33).”¹

To whom shall I confess?

Many are faced with a great problem understanding to whom they should confess their sins, when, and how. Numerous are the inventions by which men and women hope to find forgiveness of sin. Some go on long pilgrimages to perform painful penances or shut themselves away for life in a monastery or convent. We do not question the sincerity of these poor people, as they have been wrongly led by those whom they looked up to as spiritual guides. Ignorance is not an excuse, however, when we have sufficient opportunity to know the truth. Those who willfully shut their eyes and ears to the word of God and the present message make themselves responsible by neglecting the plain testimony of God’s word.

“The conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order that we may have the forgiveness of sin. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to commend our souls to the God of heaven or to expiate our transgression; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy.”²

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

A large class of people in a Christian world wrongly apply this scripture. The system of plenary confession is one in which the sinner relates all his or her sins to a confessor, priest or other person, trusting that person to extend forgiveness and to relieve and dispose of the guilt. This verse in the book of James was never intended to convey such a meaning. The apostle is here seeking to impress on the minds of the believers that they should be sincere in their attitude to one another and to confess any wrong committed whether in words or actions against another that they might be healed and fully united.

“Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you. Then you are to seek the forgiveness of God, because the brother you have wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you sinned against his Creator and Redeemer. . . .

“True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty. . . .

“In the days of Samuel, the Israelites wandered from God. They were suffering the consequences of sin, for they had lost their faith in God, lost their discernment of His power and wisdom to rule the nation, lost their confidence in His ability to defend and vindicate His cause. They turned from the great Ruler of the universe and desired to be governed as were the nations around them. Before they found peace they made this definite confes-

sion, 'We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king' (1 Samuel 12:19). The very sin of which they were convicted had to be confessed. Their ingratitude oppressed their souls and severed them from God.

"Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin. The work that we have to do on our part is plainly set before us: 'Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow' (Isaiah 1:16, 17). 'If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die' (Ezekiel 33:15). Paul says, speaking of the work of repentance: 'Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter' (2 Corinthians 7:11)."³

Two kinds of confession

In the Holy Scriptures, two kinds of confession are brought to view. First are the confessions of those who are deeply sorry for the wrong they have done and, realizing that sin separates them from God and their fellow beings, they have no peace until the wrong is made right. The second class are the confessions of those who fail to make their confession in due time or in a genuine manner. This is evidence that they are fostering pride and feel it would lower their dignity to go to those whom they have offended to ask for forgiveness. We have a notable example of such confession in the proud Saul, king of Israel. He had disobeyed God and

committed the sin of presumption, taking upon him the service which only a priest should perform—that of bringing a sacrifice. When his doom was sealed he then confessed his guilt, but he was too late and died rejected of God.

The problem was not simply how long it took to make the confession, because sometimes a person may not even become strongly convicted of his or her sin until a considerable time has passed. The Holy Spirit often works on the heart in a gentle, gradual way to point out sin, and He bears long with all of us. But when the necessary confession finally ends up being merely a superficial acknowledgment of the wrong done without an actual sorrow over how much God and others have been injured, it may amount merely to the empty utterance of a hardened heart.

Achan's experience is a warning against those who persist in covering their sin. When the city of Jericho was delivered to the Israelites by a miracle of God, they were commanded to destroy everything and carry nothing away, however valuable it might be—any gold, silver, or other precious things were to be dedicated for the sanctuary. Achan was overcome with covetousness and secretly took to his tent some gold, silver and valuable garments and hid them beneath his tent. The whole nation suffered defeat because of this hidden evil and yet the guilty sinner kept silent. Plenty of opportunity was given for confession, but the idol was dearer to him than the honor of God and His chosen nation. Achan finally broke down in confession when the Lord directly pointed him out as the guilty one. There was no mercy or forgiveness extended for the belated confession of this thief. Instead he was destroyed with all his family who had joined him in covering his transgression.

The history of Judas is familiar to all. On the night prior to His betrayal, Christ offered to this erring disciple a most precious opportunity to confess his wicked plan. Our Lord would have readily forgiven him if

he had been willing to come in humble penitence, acknowledging his guilt and pleading for forgiveness. Even when directly pointed out by the Master, he still went ahead and partook of the ordinances to make it appear that he was not the betrayer.

Finally, he confessed his sin, returned to the priests the thirty pieces of silver, the price of blood, but again it was too late. He put an end to his own life, revealing the ultimate agony and overwhelming despair of many who fail to confess their sins in due time.

"Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance which is not to be repented of, and have not with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit confessed our sins, abhorring our iniquity, we have never truly sought for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God. The only reason why we do not have remission of sins that are past is that we are not willing to humble our hearts and comply with the conditions of the word of truth. Explicit instruction is given concerning this matter. Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heartfelt and freely expressed. It is not to be urged from the sinner. It is not to be made in a flippant and careless way, or forced from those who have no realizing sense of the abhorrent character of sin. The confession that is the outpouring of the inmost soul finds its way to the God of infinite pity. The psalmist says, 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit' (Psalm 34:18)."⁴

"When sin has deadened the moral perceptions, the wrongdoer does not discern the defects of his character nor realize the enormity of the evil he has committed; and unless

he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit he remains in partial blindness to his sin. His confessions are not sincere and in earnest. To every acknowledgment of his guilt he adds an apology in excuse of his course, declaring that if it had not been for certain circumstances he would not have done this or that for which he is reproved.”⁵

Many look upon full confession as being far too humiliating for them to endure, therefore they seek to minimize their wrong and yet have their name cleared. True confession is a manifestation of a true and noble Christian character. We have more confidence in people who are ready to confess their mistakes in due time than in people that never confess anything.

To such a class comes as a comforting message the stand taken by the apostle: “If we confess our sins, he is

faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:9, 10).

The apostles of Christ have given us specific instruction concerning the steps we are to take in confession, knowing that our eternal destiny largely depends on how effectively we put this requirement into practice.

1. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul says: “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26). Many professed Christians have no rebuke of conscience when they allow day after day to pass, making no confession of wrongdoing. Other transgressions accumulate and the first is forgotten and these souls can obtain no peace with God or one another.

2. The converted family is expected to bring the sacrifice of worship to God morning and evening. Before this can be done in a way pleasing to God, unity should be restored and wrongs made right.

As mentioned above, “if you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you. Then you are to seek the forgiveness of God, because the brother you have wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you sinned against his Creator and Redeemer.”⁶

“When one who professes to serve God wrongs or injures a brother, he misrepresents the character of God to that brother, and the wrong must be confessed, he must acknowledge it to be sin, in order to be in harmony with God. Our brother may have done us a greater wrong than we have done him, but this does not lessen our responsibility. If when we come before God we remember that another has aught against us, we are to leave our gift of prayer, of thanksgiving, of freewill offering, and go to the brother with whom we are at variance, and in

humility confess our own sin and ask to be forgiven.

“If we have in any manner defrauded or injured our brother, we should make restitution. If we have unwittingly borne false witness, if we have misstated his words, if we have injured his influence in any way, we should go to the ones with whom we have conversed about him, and take back all our injurious misstatements.”⁷

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you” (Matthew 6:14).

Before the Sabbath of the Lord begins, every difficulty among the members of the church should be made right. This is the duty of those who lead in the Lord’s work. The same work should be done before any member participates in the ordinances of the church. Those who partake of the sacred emblems without being reconciled to God or one another bring dishonor to the body of Christ. “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Corinthians 11:28, 29).

“We are sinful by nature, and we have a work to do to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Let us improve this precious privilege to confess our faults one to another, and pray one for another, that we may be healed.”⁸

“Let our gatherings together be made seasons of heart searching and confession. It is the privilege of this people who have had such great blessings to be trees of righteousness, shedding forth comfort and blessing.”⁹

R

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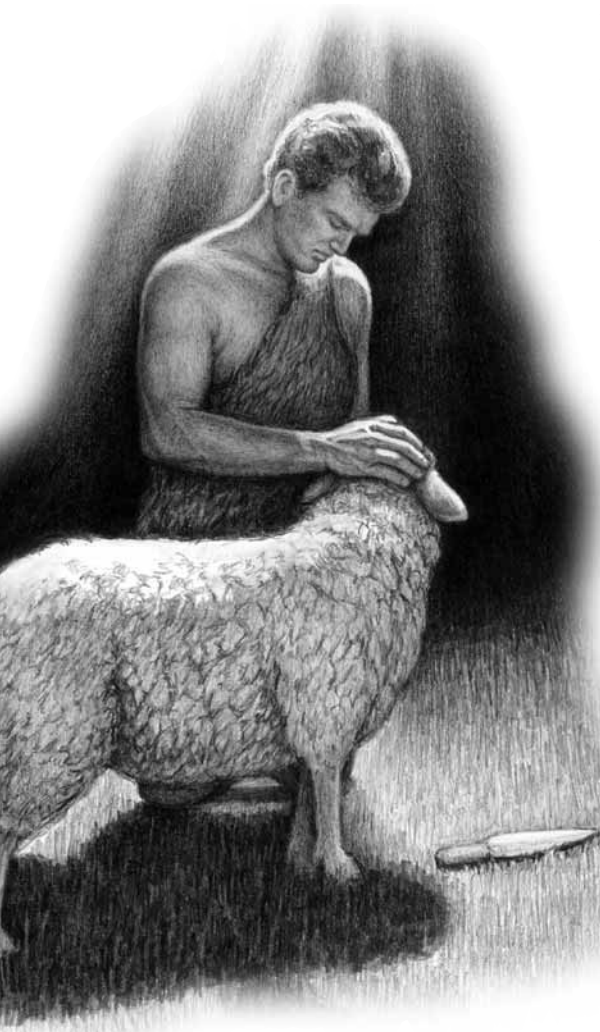
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Melody and Harmony in the Western World

BY B. MONTEIRO

Music. It's everywhere. Even before the creation of Adam and Eve on the sixth day of the week, birds were already sounding their joyful carols of praise to God. And even before that, music resounded throughout the courts of Heaven. The angelic choir praising God was led by Lucifer, the covering cherub, until iniquity was found in him. Then he who was the gifted, master musician of all created beings spurned His Creator and had to be banished from that peaceful, blissful abode. As soon as he triggered the fall of the race dwelling on earth, this planet became enemy-occupied territory. And as one of the many tragic results, ever since, there have been two kinds of music in our world—music that glorifies God and music that glorifies Satan.

Which is which?

This is something the God-fearing person must learn how to discern. If we want to develop Christlikeness, we must have wisdom to discern which music truly glorifies our Creator. Otherwise, we will end up being swept up by the mainstream tide of sound permeating today's worldly culture—the typical music which resounds in the marketplace, flows over most of the radio waves, and punctuates almost every arena of society.

We need to realize how much music affects us spiritually. After seeing, hearing is the most influential of

our five senses, and music is definitely a direct avenue to the soul. It actually bypasses our reasoning processes, affecting our minds on a subconscious level. Our heartbeat, respiration, and hormonal production are all influenced by music and it deeply stirs our feelings and emotions. Whatever feelings are habitually stirred either this way or by other stimuli becomes a crucial factor to whether we are finally saved or lost, because “the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character”¹ and “actions repeated form habits, habits form character, and by the character our destiny for time and for eternity is decided.”²

Elements of music

Music is chiefly made up of three basic elements—melody, harmony, and rhythm. There are other aspects as well—dynamics (changes in volume), form, and style or manner of performance. Then, of course, there are often words to the music, which would need to be analyzed separately. But in order to better understand just the sound factor in music itself and keep its study relatively simple for the layperson, we should begin by zeroing in on two of the most basic elements, melody and harmony:

Melody

Melody is governed by pitch; the notes of music go up or down, high or low (this is **not** to be confused

with volume, as when one turns a radio up or down). Traditionally, the melody is the most noticeable element in music—it is the “tune.” Most tunes are either obviously cheerful or clearly solemn and usually tend to be pretty neutral in the effect they produce, being largely influenced by the other factors which accompany them—harmony, rhythm, and style. **In music which appeals to the higher, more noble powers of the mind, melody predominates and rhythm is the least prominent element. The mind does not tend to be uplifted or ennobled when rhythm (the beat) is chief.** An excessive repetition of a melody can end up as the vain repetition Jesus warned against in the prayers of the heathen (see Matthew 6:7). Yet melody that is repeated, but continually developed further by various changes, does not necessarily carry a hypnotic or vain effect. It simply adds to the unity and cohesion of the piece.

The psalms of David were originally songs, and in them we find systematic repetition and refrains. Unfortunately, the actual music from ancient times has pretty much been lost, although some of the flavor might conceivably be found in what is referred to nowadays as “Jewish” music, which is often characterized by a certain pathos and poignancy. (However, just as the Jewish religion at large today bears little resemblance to the faith of its early forbears, we can only assume the music

has likewise taken a similar turn.)

We also know that ungodly counterfeit music existed in ancient times, instigating such notorious events as the idolatrous dancing around the golden calf (Exodus 32:18, 19) and when at Balaam's suggestion the Israelites, "beguiled with music and dancing, and allured by the beauty of heathen vestals . . . cast off their fealty to Jehovah."³

Harmony

Harmony is the blending of two pitches played or sung simultaneously. In order to sound pleasing to the ear, they should "harmonize" nicely. It is interesting to see how harmony has developed throughout the history of western civilization. It first progressed into an artistic richness, but then eventually declined with the increase of wickedness in society. Why do we say this? Let us make a brief overview of the consecutive periods of music as an art form in the history of western civilization: Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Contemporary.

1. The limited amount of music we have from **Medieval and Renaissance** times is plain and rather hollow-sounding to our ears today, with its limited harmony. It is often harmonized in open fifths, meaning a combination of two pitches five steps apart. On the other hand, the harmonies found in the later periods are based largely on the triad, best illustrated by playing three pitches simultaneously on the piano using your little finger, middle finger and thumb, not touching the empty keys in between. This "triad" type of harmony has a certain fullness that is pleasing to the ear.

2. The **Baroque** era followed the great Reformation in Europe

and reached its peak during the lifetime of Johann Sebastian Bach, who lived from 1685 to 1750. Bach was a God-fearing Lutheran who was a master at producing harmony. His harmonies are rich, artistic, and beautiful—you will find a nice example of his work in the hymn, "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." Even with this advancing harmonic development, however, melody was still the most important factor in the Baroque era, as revealed in the music of Vivaldi, Telemann, and Pachelbel, composer of the famous "Canon." Georg Frideric Handel wrote the great oratorio, "The Messiah," best known for its "Hallelujah Chorus." As some are aware, the Spirit of Prophecy speaks against "opera, with its fascinating display and bewildering music."³ But oratorios such as "The Messiah" and the "St. Matthew's Passion" of Bach are not opera. Today, although these masterpieces are often sung by singers with cultivated voices having the over-refined vibrato characteristic of operatic training, that type of singing is not actually the proper style in which these compositions were originally produced or performed. Opera in its truest sense evolved later in history as a worldly

drama sung in a theater with elaborately changing sets, props, and costumes as in a play.

3. The **Classical** era was characterized by the music of composers such as Mozart and Haydn. Again, while not specifically designed as church music, because the music of Mozart is so well organized and orderly, it can nonetheless be considered a great blessing to western culture as its influence tends to be quite positive, uplifting, and ennobling. It tends to cheer up the mood without resorting to frivolity. The harmonies are almost never dissonant, but rather are refreshing and pleasant to the ear. The few dissonant tones found both in this era and in the Baroque era are in the form of "passing" tones, hardly noticeable—the emotional response to these tones is merely like that of quick, insignificant challenge on the road to clear victory. Scientific studies indicate that the music of Mozart is actually conducive to developing intelligence of babies and young children. High school and college students also find they perform better in school when they listen to Mozart. (His music is also a great accompaniment to motivate diligent housecleaning!)



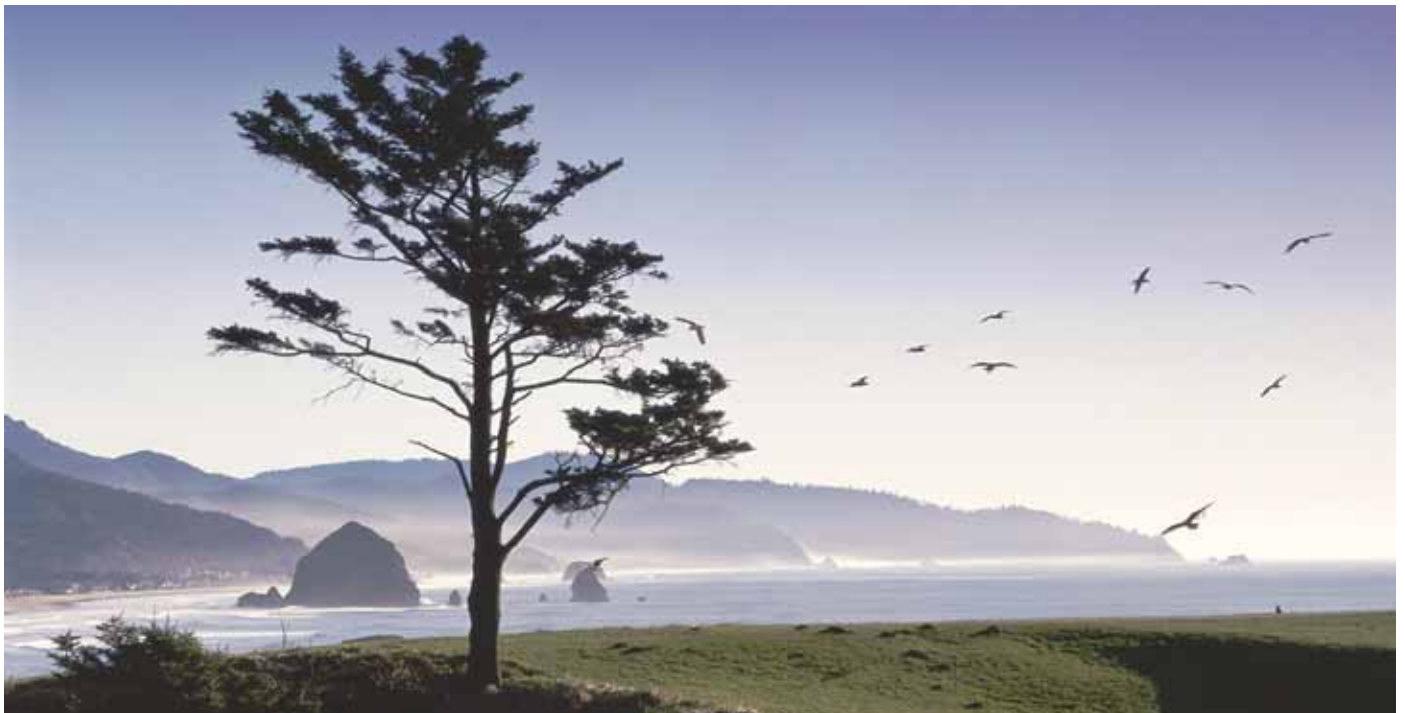
4. The famous composer Ludwig van Beethoven was born during the classical era. He composed some sweet, orderly music (including works such as the “Pastoral” Symphony no. 6 which, to our ears today, radiates with a refreshing innocence so rarely found in this generation). Beethoven had a long career, and his later works are more contemplative, beginning to reveal the gradual transition into what is known as the **Romantic** era. During this time, all music became expressive of a much wider range of sentiments, sometimes encompassing anger and eventually contrasting peace vs. inner turmoil even to the wildest extremes (e.g., the symphonies of Gustav Mahler). Some of this music can be uplifting, but then other pieces become so emotionally mesmerizing that their music tugs very strongly on the heartstrings. This then becomes no longer healthy for a Christian, who should seek to live by principle, not passion. And this is where the very heavy opera comes in, and the dazzle and melodrama of it all can be found even in the purely instrumental pieces. There are, however, still some beautiful, noble pieces of music to be found from this era—

some written by Beethoven, and others by composers such as Johannes Brahms (whose religious music is of a high quality), Felix Mendelssohn (who composed some fine works such as the oratorio “Elijah” and the “Reformation” symphony), and Sir Edward Elgar, whose famous “Pomp and Circumstance” march is often played with solemn majesty at graduation ceremonies. (There is a stirring nobility and beautiful dignity about this particular piece of music. How much more appropriate would it be, however, if its poignant solemnity would specifically honor God instead of always being a backdrop to honoring the achievements of mere mortals.) Other examples of music characteristic of the romantic period are found in the hymns of composer Joseph Barnby, some of which are found in our new hymnbook. “Sunset and Evening Star” in the old Church Hymnal was another nice one by Joseph Barnby.

Overall, in the Romantic era we find ourselves in an increasingly gray area for the Christian spiritually, a vague sort of borderline. The era began around the mid-1800’s. From that point on, it is interesting to observe the gradual decline of music as no longer being as uplifting an art

form, now paralleling the similar spiritual decline occurring in the religious world. This is a huge generalization, of course, and there are clear exceptions to it, but the overall trend is nonetheless noticeable. In the music of the Romantic era, there can be such heavy tugging on the emotions that we must be reminded “it is unsafe to consult feeling or to trust to our own heart, for the wise man declares, ‘He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool’ (Proverbs 28:26).”⁴ This is reminiscent of the Spirit of Prophecy evaluation of the foolish virgins to whom Christ referred in Matthew 25: “When there was a revival in the church, their **feelings were stirred**; but they failed to have oil in their vessels, because they did not bring the principles of godliness into their daily life and character.”⁵ Music is great at stirring up the feelings or emotions, but only a certain kind of music can actually help to inspire godly behavior.

5. **Contemporary or “modern”** music. Sadly, here is where melody and harmony actually degenerated into chaos. While some composers still held onto at least the Romantic style well into the 20th century (composers such as Elgar, whom we men-



tioned), the big innovation which prevailed during the 20th century was the twelve-tone system, pioneered by Austrian composers Anton von Webern and Arnold Schoenberg and imitated by many others. There is supposed to be great order in this method of composition—after all, it is carefully organized so that no pitch can be repeated until 11 different ones are sounded. But the result? To the average listener, there is absolutely no distinctive melody that one can readily follow, no sweet harmony—the whole sound is nothing short of painful to the ears. The dissonance and blatant discord are emotionally troubling, even to the point of being downright depressing. Yet this type of music is played before thousands of people at a time in major concert halls around the world, in large cities having sophisticated galleries of modern art on the same boulevard. If you’ve ever seen the modern art, you can pretty well imagine the music.

Where does this all take us? Clearly we are living in the last days of earth’s history. Society is not getting better, it is getting worse; it is not becoming more sane, it is becoming more irrational. And the religious world is declining hand in hand. “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Music outside the concert hall

We have discussed the history of music purely as a general art form to reveal more clearly and objectively what has also happened to it within the realm of sacred music. If you browse through our new church hymnal, as well as the older Church Hymnal, you will find that the vast majority are written in the Classical style, with some in the Baroque and a few in the Romantic style. (One interesting hymn, “O Come, O Come, Immanuel,” is actually a medieval plainsong harmonized at a later period.)

In view of all we have just shared about the downward spiral of art music which began roughly after the

mid-1800’s, consider for a moment: Do you think the enemy of souls would launch his attack only on the world’s music in general? Has he simply allowed the church to glide along in peace during this Laodicean era which began in 1844? Not according to the True Witness to the Laodiceans! If anything, the church is under a subtler, more dangerous attack from the enemy than even the world is! It clearly stands to reason that music to be presented in churches needs to be carefully scrutinized as to whether or not it truly glorifies God.

In discussing music in the concert hall, we did not yet touch upon the other places where live music is performed. Aside from churches, it is also heard in dance halls, nightclubs, bars, discos, brothels, and shopping malls aimed to do whatever it takes to sell you something. And as society constantly integrates into more of a melting pot of various cultures, religions, and customs, musical styles also merge. Much of what is called the “Gospel” music style of today traces its roots to the tribal rituals of pagan animism (spiritualism), and much of the “Contemporary Christian” music is being written and performed by rock ’n roll stars. Even if these musicians have supposedly converted to Christ, where did they get their training and how did they develop their musical tastes and abilities? Was their musical foundation grounded in that which is straightforward, upright, and pure? Usually not, and the fruit clearly reveals it as such to the discerning ear.

Music is definitely a direct avenue to the soul. It actually bypasses our reasoning processes, affecting our minds on a subconscious level.

Conclusion

There is indeed a troubling array of temptations that beset our pathway in the realm of music. We have only scratched the surface of the topic so far. Our next article will focus on musical style and rhythm—important factors we need to understand. As we approach the end of this world’s history, we must develop ever keener discernment. In this Laodicean era, the True Witness bids us “anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:18) and He declares that His faithful ministers “shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean” (Ezekiel 44:23). “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16). We can only thank the Lord that even with all the corruption which prevails today, we can still find some “old paths” to obtain a small taste—catch a faint glimmer—of what godly music should sound like: Ennobling, uplifting, and pointing heavenward. “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

References

- ¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 310.
- ² *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 356.
- ³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 454.
- ⁴ *Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 446.
- ⁵ *The Review and Herald*, September 17, 1895.

God's Mercy in Nigeria

BY STEVEN GYANG

It is with profound joy and thankfulness to God for sparing our lives and giving us this opportunity that we share the experience we have passed through over the last two years.

Plateau, one of the 36 states in the heart of Nigeria, is widely acclaimed to be "the Home of Peace and Tourism." It is predominantly a "Christian" state, with other religions (Islam and Paganism) constituting about 30% of its total population.

However, on the 7th of September, 2001, just four days prior to the September 11th terrorist attack in the USA, the once peaceful atmosphere of the state was shattered by a religious crisis. It started in Jos, the state capital, and within 24 hours, it spread to most parts of the state, including Riyom, the local government area in which the believers here are located.

In Rim, a village where we are living, there were Fulani cattle ranchers who were dwelling around the village. They are Muslims. We had been having a cordial relationship with them mostly due to the assistance we have rendered them through medical missionary work.

When the news of the crisis reached the village, the so-called "Christians" took weapons and started attacking the Muslims, burning down their houses and destroying their properties. When the villagers noticed that we did not join them in carrying weapons and participating in the wanton destruction of houses and properties, they started interrogating us. It is sad to note here that even some who profess to believe the threefold angels' message in the village joined them and some of them

were actually in the vanguard of this destruction. Soon, we were summoned to appear before the village head and the community elders. The "Christians" gave us two options: either to join them or to leave the village, as most of us are settlers in the village. They tried to make us believe that they were doing God's service, and that we should contribute some money for the procurement of weapons and ammunitions, but we declined, explaining to them that we are peaceful people, we don't kill and moreover that "vengeance belongs to God."

On hearing this, they were angry with us and told us that we should leave the village immediately. However, we couldn't leave immediately as there was restriction of movement. When some of the villagers heard what happened, they objected to the decision of the village elders on the ground that we had been a source of blessing to them especially in medical missionary assistance. As a result, two parties developed among them.

During the crisis, there were casualties from the village. Since the only public clinic was closed down, it became an opportunity for us to come in and offer first aid treatment to them all.

After two weeks, soldiers were sent to intervene in the crisis and restore peace and normalcy to the village as well as surrounding villages. This was achieved. After some months, some of the Fulani came to our houses unknown to the villagers, to find out whether we were still in the village or had left it. We assured them that we always live in peace

with everybody as the Bible admonishes us to do (Hebrews 12:14). It was another opportunity to render welfare assistance by providing them with some clothing as their properties were destroyed during the crisis. On reaching their camp, they spread the news of what we had done for them, saying we are a different kind of Christians than they had ever seen before.

The relative peace lasted for about twelve months until there was a retaliatory attack on a villager in December, 2002. This spread to surrounding villages and Rim was the last to be attacked. Meanwhile the Fulani instructed their men not to touch our houses. The words of Proverbs 16:7 "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" was fulfilled in our Mission.

On one fateful day, some of us were in the market square and suddenly we heard gunshots from different directions. There was general confusion and everybody was looking for a place to hide or to find an escape route. However, we thank God that He helped us to be composed and look for our brethren and children in order to leave the village. Though 21 villagers, including women and children, were killed, none of us were affected. Also, houses and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed, but none of ours were touched. It is wonderful to note that one of the village women who was hiding overheard one of the Fulani armed men telling his fellows that they should not venture toward the direction of our houses.

Immediately after this second crisis, some of the brethren and sisters moved to other areas but about half are still living in Rim. During these crises, we came much closer to each other, praying together, and sharing food together so that none of us would lack.

As we reflect back on our experience during those trying times, we can confidently say that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). **R**



Have you heard yet about Twin Lakes Missionary Institute? I hope so! But just in case you haven't or the report was not complete, we'd like to share what is happening in this northeast corner of the United States.

Because of the growing realization of the need to educate our young people according to the Creator's plan, brethren from all over North America met together to pray and plan how to implement this instruction in the best way. As often is the case in God's work, plans begin with what is available, then by His help and our diligent cooperation, gradually extend to accomplish His ultimate purpose.

Our brethren of North America have chosen representatives from each Field to compose a Board of Trustees for this educational facility of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. This governing board then appointed a school board designated to administrate what is now known as Twin Lakes Missionary Institute. Located in the beautiful area of Shohola, Pennsylvania, an existing property has been leased by the school from local Fields. In the early spring of 2004, an on-site staff began the necessary changes and preparations for the classes which began in September 2004.

We're excited as we think of this facility being an inspiration and help to our young people, but also of the impact this will have upon our church and our society. God wants to have "an army of youth rightly trained" for such a time as this. This training is for every part of our being, promoting the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual natures. For this reason TLMI is offering not only a strong, biblically-based academic program, but a strong practical curriculum in order to follow God's plan.

Unhindered by outside accreditation policies, this school is committed to training consecrated individuals to become more efficient missionaries for Christ and to learn how to be self-supporting in the process. With this goal in mind there are several ways to accomplish it.

As you may remember, there are ABC's to be learned in following God's way, and so in fulfillment of His instruction, land is already being worked for a strong agricultural program. Experienced staff will be able, by God's help, to train others in methods of growth, harvest and care. These in turn will be able to train others. The principles involved are needed in all facets of life, and agriculture will be one of the means designated to help support this institution financially.

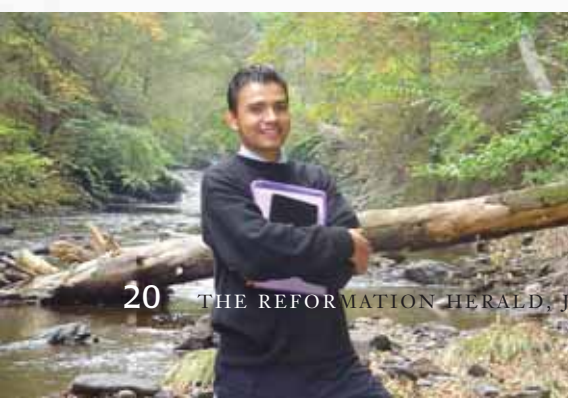
Already there is a local store asking for produce, and nearby residents are looking for sources of bulk food. As God opens the way, these will be part of the industrial program in place to help offset tuition costs for the students.

Another viable opportunity—it's more than a hobby when conducted properly—is beekeeping. By personal experience, the TLMI staff knows that with a fairly small investment plus patience, gentleness, and some courage, beekeeping blessed by our Creator quickly repays and can be increased to help support this project.

TLMI has also committed to having a Literature Evangelist Coordinator on site for the training, encouragement, and active participation in canvassing programs. With diligence and God's blessings, this will accomplish many things—offsetting tuition and school costs, missionary outreach activity and church growth in those areas where the students participate. By God's grace, we must be people of action. And God will raise up an army of youth that are developed in knowledge, character, and the practical skills to be of help to all those that enter their sphere.

Of course, this all takes time and effort. Our youth need our help. TLMI needs all of our help. Facilities are being improved and need to be expanded to set up the industrial program according to God's design. Our youth need to be encouraged to enter into such an educational program that God's work can be finished.

Will you help our young people, our church, our society? Will you commit yourself to prayer, to support, to whatever the Lord asks so that individuals can be trained, the work finished, and the Lord can come? With a spirit of sacrifice, commitment and consecration, this can happen quickly. I want to see Jesus, don't you? I want suffering and sin to end, don't you? Then let us band together and accomplish God's plan whatever the cost. God will bless as you do. R



A NEWS UPDATE FROM TWIN LAKES

On September 13, 2004, classes began in Pennsylvania at Twin Lakes Missionary Institute with eager students and staff. What a joy to live and work with young people whose one goal is to serve the Lord Jesus! Willingness, cheerfulness and consecration are the words that best describe those who have come from many different places to study God's will.

With a full load of academic subjects to cover in the mornings, the practical program is a welcome change for all in the afternoons. All are students in the school of Christ so classes are always interesting. We are learning with and from one another.

How can we best describe what has been happening thus far? There have been so many different activities that we must tell you of only a few of the highlights. We've practiced being firefighters, farmers, chefs and painters so far. Organizing, general upkeep and lawn care have also been part of the activities covered. Besides class instruction on history, doctrine, anatomy, physiology, evangelism, and the canvassing, students are also engaged in a number of practical courses through various on-campus projects. These practical courses include electrical work, plumbing, cooking, sewing, auto mechanics, home construction and repair, agriculture, beekeeping, and much more. In December 2004 the student body conducted successful canvassing campaigns in Nashville (Tennessee), and Orlando (Florida), where their efforts yielded many new interested contacts so that the local workers there will be busy for some time to come. Students wondered about how they could get used to going to bed earlier but frequently ask, "Is it time for bed yet?"

Students can best describe what is standing out most to them in our brief time together. Let's ask them:

When the question is presented: "What have you enjoyed best?" the answers are:

GL: "Is there anything I don't like? Driving the tractor, soy puffs. It is hard to choose which is best when you have the right people working with you. The closer you come to God, the more He blesses and He has blessed me with an increase of family members. We do things together and the best of all is exhorting one another into a deeper, closer relationship with our Maker.

AW: "I have enjoyed my first few weeks at school very much. What I like most of all is the environment with its opportunities for spiritual growth. The school is quiet and peaceful with nature close by and abundant fresh air. The atmosphere of the school is very refreshing and calming. I have also enjoyed studying God's word so much of the time. Our classes are spiritually centered, and I enjoy being able to have my everyday studying so spiritual. I feel as if I am getting a very good supply of spiritual food, which is wonderful. I am grateful to the Lord for giving me such a valuable opportunity here at school."

KS: "If I had known what a blessing this experience would be I wouldn't have thought twice about coming! To me the greatest blessing is the true, deep, Christian fellowship with young people that are serious about getting ready for heaven. I don't feel so alone!"

RM: "I like the solitude here that I can be closer to the Lord."

JM: "I like fixing the car, going for walks, seeing the creatures and soy puffs! I also like the way that God has taught me to see things the way He wants me to see. I also like to study the marvels that God has made in the human body, and the wonderful teachings of God's word. I pray for lots of blessings for the school and all the students. All should make an effort to get here."



GG: "I am very thankful to God for this privilege to be here. I am thankful to the Lord because today we live in the last days when the history of the earth is approaching the end. I want to thank the brothers and sisters of TLMI for this opportunity to be here and to study the word of God. May the Lord bless you and this school.

"As well as beginning the full-time program, part-time seminar students have also joined the 'family.' What are some of their observations?"

KC: "As a participant in the past-time seminar program, I am receiving a real blessing from the studies involved and look forward to each session. There is much to learn and I realize that I know so little in comparison. The classroom teaching and discussion is very valuable and brings out the deeper things which I may not glean on my own. I desire to keep studying and learning more of the wonderful truth with God's help and want to impart it to others. This program is helping me to do both.

"I welcome the opportunity to learn more how to research and compile material in order to spread the message. . . .

"I am not ready to sit in my rocking chair and wait for the Lord to come but desire to work with and for Him so that He can come!"

Praise the Lord for His work in human hearts!

What have been the greatest challenges we have faced? The mini flood that greeted us one morning. With all of the hurricanes threatening the eastern coast of the US, residual effects have been felt here. Twice we have had the basement flooded and our new lounge area has been watered as well. Our need—a new roof and gutters at the front of the building. Temporary measures have been taken to avoid more water inside by extending down pipes with existing fragments of old ones and a blue tarp nicely placed on the roof held down with cement blocks. It works for now, but we ask you to pray for the necessary means to help meet this immediate need. If you can help, please let us know soon.

We thank you for your prayers and support.

*The staff and students at
Twin Lakes Missionary Institute*



TWIN LAKES MISSIONARY INSTITUTE

*Have you heard what is happening at TLMI?
Renovation, and building lots of work is our sigh.
We're learning economy, practicality too,
By changing an old thing, and making it new.*

*That's what Jesus delights to do in each person,
He makes an old thing, a brand new creation.
That's our purpose here and we want you to know,
Our youth need some training, God's blessing bestowed.*

*There's a team that God brought from all different places,
To commit to the training of many people and races.
He's chosen you and me and our brethren, you know,
A commission to work on, many places to go.*

*To share the message of truth and of love,
Preparation to live in those mansions above.
But takes a decision from both you and from me,
Will we do what it takes, whate'er it may be?*

*We're committed to serving our Saviour and Lord.
For us, He left Heaven where He's loved and adored.
He left all for the trials, the sorrow, the pain,
The only advantage was us He would gain.*

*Lord, give us Thy Spirit, to finish Thy work,
To leave all, to give all, to withstand any hurt,
That comes when we choose to follow Thy way,
To love them, and help them whatever they say.*

*Give us humility, to others esteem,
Perseverance, patience and kindness that's seen.
Temperance, longsuffering, forbearance, too,
That we can show others that we do follow You.*

*Well, brethren, what decision will you now make?
What road will you follow, what path will you take?
Will we choose to work together till death do us part?
Are we here for the duration or to leave at the start?*

*Let's move forward together; the Lord is our Head,
His promises carry, by His directions be led.
The youth need our help, the work needs our hand,
By God's grace in our hearts, united we'll stand.*

—pjs



Baptism of seven souls at youth convention in Moldova, 2004



Baptism of seven souls in Madrid, Spain, June 2004



Finland brethren and sisters, August 2004



Youth convention in Moldova, 2004



Camp meeting in
Haiti, December
2003



Union delegation session in Peru, November 2004



Leading brethren of Central American Union, August 2004



Youth convention in Brazil, October 2004

MOVING? Please let us know.



Beholding the Birds

*“Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings,
and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very
hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore:
ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6, 7).*

What makes a bird a bird? Is it because it flies? Not necessarily. Some birds cannot fly, but nearly all birds do have seven things in common:

1. They usually have wings.
2. They have backbones.
3. They breathe air.
4. They hatch from shelled eggs.
5. They are warm-blooded.
6. They have bills but no teeth.
7. They have feathers and wish-bones.

Birds come in many different sizes and each species has wings adapted to its particular needs. For example, gulls and other seabirds have long, slim wings to help them easily glide over the water. Hawks and other birds of prey have wide, slotted wings to allow them to soar high in the sky. Birds that are plump such as quails have short, round wings to lift them off the ground quickly.

All flying birds have light, hollow bones with thin struts of bone between the air-filled spaces. There are usually three types of feathers on these birds—down feathers for warmth, body feathers for protection, and flight feathers to help them fly. Feathers are one of God’s many wonderful gifts. That small songbird, the chickadee, can cheerfully sing

even in the coldest winter when it fluffs up its feathers to effectively trap warm air around its tiny body.

In the springtime, birds lay eggs and raise their young. The female birds are usually plainer in color than the males so they can hide safely in the nest, protecting their babies from predators. Bird nests are often made of twigs, dry grass, leaves, mud, hair, feathers, or even string—whatever can be found as suitable building material. “Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God” (Psalm 84:3). Jesus cares for these little creatures so much that He gives them more earthly riches than He Himself had when He came to earth. He explained: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20).

“It is He who made the flowers and who gave to the sparrow its song who says, ‘Consider the lilies,’ ‘Behold the birds.’ R.V. In the loveli-



ness of the things of nature you may learn more of the wisdom of God than the schoolmen know. On the lily’s petals, God has written a message for you, written in language that your heart can read only as it unlearns the lessons of distrust and selfishness and corroding care. Why has He given you the singing birds and the gentle blossoms, but from the overflowing love of a Father’s heart, that would brighten and gladden your path of life? All that was needed for existence would have been yours without the flowers and birds, but God was not content to provide what would suffice for mere existence. He has filled earth and air and sky with glimpses of beauty to tell you of His loving thought for you.”¹

R

¹ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 96.