

The Baptist

CHALLENGE

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WHOLE NO. 507

An Indictment of Pentecostalism

By Brad Johnson

“A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Mt. 16:4).

This article is the fruit of the many years that I spent with a troubled heart as I listened to the supernatural claims and observed the lives and doctrine of those who argue for the perpetuity of the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit,

and who presented themselves as being vessels through whom God is doing this work. In hindsight I see how the Lord used this unrest to drive me into His word where alone we are able to lay a foundation that will stand and speak peace to the soul as we contend with the workers of iniquity who never cease to assail

the church of God.

It is my earnest prayer that what He has given me will provide others like myself, who are experiencing the same unrest, with a firm conviction founded upon His word that their conscience may be clear as together we earnestly contend for the faith that was *once for all* delivered

to the saints. SOLI DEO GLORIA!

A Correct Understanding Of God’s Immutability

In my numerous conversations with those who hold to a belief in the perpetuity of these gifts it

(See **JOHNSON** on page 18)

Message #5 — Preached February 4, 1979

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:7-8).

The writer of this book is not “John the Baptist.”

Vision of the Second Coming

By M. L. Moser, Editor

This is John the Apostle. He is the writer and when we read in verse 4 “John to the seven churches” we are talking about John the Apostle. Now He is a Baptist, but he is not John the Baptist who was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every writer of the New Testament was a Baptist. That’s all there were during the days of the New Testament. All were Baptists. The church that

the Lord Jesus Christ started was a Baptist church, and the writers of our New Testament were all Baptist preachers, and all the apostles were Baptists. So this is a John, a Baptist, but not “John the Baptist” that we read about in Mark 1, who was the first prophet of the New Testament dispensation. This is John the Apostle.

I want us to see the vision, the coming of the

Lord Jesus Christ in His second coming. *“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”*

This is speaking about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This coming has been spoken

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Quiz The Pastor

On What Day of the Week Was Christ Crucified?

By James Green

“As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matt.12:40).

In addition to the above statement, study all the passages which speak of “after three days” (Mark 8:31; 9:31; Matt. 27:63; John 2:19) also the passages which speak of “the third day” (Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; I Cor 15:4). There are three ideas as to the day on which Christ was crucified. Some say He was crucified on Friday, some that it was on Thursday, and some that it was on Wednesday. The traditional and most popular view is that it was on Friday. The main argument for this view is (1) that the

next day after the crucifixion was the Sabbath day. (Jn 19:31; Luke 23:54-56) assuming that the Sabbath here refers to Saturday, and (2) that the Jews reckoned any part of a day or night as constituting a whole, hence, any part of three days and nights would be counted as a full three days and nights. The problem here is that only two nights or parts thereof, and only one day, and a very small part of another can be accounted for by this view. So far as the Sabbath is concerned, the Jews had numerous holy Sabbaths or high days which did not fall on Saturday. The day following the Passover was always a High Sabbath regardless of what week day it fell on. John tells us that the Sabbath after Jesus was crucified was “an high day” (John 19:31), i.e., not

the regular seventh day Sabbath, but the special high Sabbath which followed immediately after the Passover. This could have been any day of the week. It is my personal conviction that Christ was crucified on Wednesday. He died at 3:00 p.m. (Matt 27:46-50). Considerable time passed between the time of His death and His burial, probably right at three hours. This is evidenced by the number of things which are recorded as having taken place. Note: The deputation of the Jews to Pilate (John 19:31); Pilate heard their request and sent soldiers or messengers from Jerusalem to Golgotha; Soldiers came and brake the legs of the two thieves and pierced the side of Jesus (Jn. 19:32-34) after this, Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked permission to take away the body of Jesus (Jn. 19:38); Pilate then called a centurion and asked him if Jesus had been dead a while (Mk. 15:44); the centurion inquiries, probably having to send to Golgotha and reported back to Pilate, who then gave Joseph permission to remove the body (Mk 15:44-45); Joseph then went to the market and bought fine linen, and returned to Golgotha with the linen and Pilate’s permit to the centurion on duty and with help from friends or servants, took down the body of Jesus, covered it with a cloth and carried it to and placed it in Joseph’s tomb (Mk. 15:46). It is

inconceivable to me that Joseph placed Jesus body in the tomb without washing the blood and filth with which He had been defiled from it. This would have taken some time. By the time all this had taken place the beginning of the Sabbath was so near that there was not even time to embalm the body. This is evidenced by the fact that the women, when they beheld how His body was laid, went and prepared spices and ointments to be used for this purpose, but could not apply them until after the Sabbath day (Luke 23:55, 56). If He had been crucified on Thursday, then both Friday and Saturday would have been holy Sabbaths and He could not have been embalmed until Sunday. We learn, however, that Nicodemus and Joseph returned, evidently on Friday and did embalm the body, wrapping it in linen clothes with spices (Jn 19:39-40). You will note here, that the cloth (singular-Matt 27:59) in which Joseph first wrapped the body, and the clothes (plural-John 19:40) in which Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped it in the embalming are distinctly different. Evidently, these were on two separate occasions. The most convincing argument for a Wednesday crucifixion is Christ’s own statement in which he states that He would be in the heart of the earth three

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THE BAPTIST CHALLENGE

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The Protestant Persecutions

Part 1 of 2

By David Cloud

The following is from *A History of the Churches from a Baptist Perspective*, which is one of the 13 titles in the *Advanced Bible Studies Series* published by *Way of Life Literature*:

Though the Protestant Reformers of the 16th to the 18th centuries demanded religious liberty from the Roman Catholic Church, in many cases they did not give liberty to others. A fact rarely told in church histories and therefore little known is that the Protestants of the Reformation era persecuted Baptists and others who differed from them.

Zwingli In Zurich, Switzerland Was A Persecutor

1. Before adopting Baptist principles, Anabaptist leaders Conrad Grebel (1498-1526), Felix Manz, and George Cajacob were associated with Zwingli in the beginning of his work in Zurich. Unlike Zwingli, they moved beyond Protestantism and state churchism to a true New Testament faith and

practice.

2. By the end of 1524, Grebel and Manz had taken a position against infant baptism and wanted to establish a true church composed only of regenerate baptized members with a simple Lord's Supper as a memorial meal.

3. On January 17, 1525, a disputation between Zwingli and those opposed to infant baptism was conducted in Zurich before the city council. The decision was not long in coming. The next day, January 18, the council decreed that all infants must be baptized within eight days of birth, and those who did not baptize their infants would be banished from the city. Another decree on Jan. 21 forbade all opponents of infant baptism to meet together or to speak in public.

4. The day of the first city council proclamation, Grebel, Manz, Cajacob, and others of like mind met together in defiance of the decree but in obedience to the Word of God and determined to form a church based upon biblical principles as they saw them at that point. Cajacob was first baptized by Grebel upon confession of his faith

in Christ; Cajacob, in turn, baptized the others. The baptism was by pouring, but they later adopted immersion. Within a week, 35 more were baptized.

5. In March of that year, the Zwingli-influenced city council issued a strong edict against the Anabaptists, which was ratified in November:

"You know without doubt, and have heard from many that for a long time, some peculiar men, who imagine that they are learned, have come forward astonishingly, and without any evidence of the Holy Scriptures, given as a pretext by simple and pious men, have preached, and without the permission and consent of the church, have proclaimed that infant baptism did not proceed from God, but from the devil, and, therefore, ought not to be practiced. ... We, therefore, ordain and require that hereafter all men, women, boys and girls forsake rebaptism, and shall not make use of it hereafter, and shall let infants be baptized; whoever shall act contrary to this public edict shall be fined for every offense, one mark; and *if any be disobedient and stubborn they shall be treated with severity*; for,

the obedient we will protect; the disobedient we will punish according to his deserts, without fail; by this all are to conduct themselves. All this we confirm by this public document, stamped with the seal of our city, and given on St. Andrew's Day, A. D., 1525."

6. The Anabaptists and their leaders, including Grebel and Manz, were thrown into prison.

7. In December 1527, Felix Manz, Jacob Falk, and Henry Reiman were put to death by drowning. The council had decreed, *Qui mersus fuerit mergatur*, or "He who immerses shall be immersed." The Protestant leader Gastins wrote, "They like immersion, so let us immerse them" (*De Anabaptiami*, 8. Basite, 1544, cited by Christian). The Baptists were delivered to the executioner, who bound their hands, placed them in a boat and threw them into the water. Some Protestants mockingly called this the "third baptism."

The Baptist martyr Felix Manz (or Mans, Mentz) (1498-1527) was a very learned man, skilled in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

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As he was led through Zurich to the boat, he praised God that he was going to die for the truth of the Word of God. His old mother and faithful brother exhorted him to be steadfast unto death. After declaring, "In thy hands, Lord, I commend my spirit," he was cruelly drowned. Protestant leader Henry Bullinger in Geneva wrote an account of Manz's execution and supported it (Reformations Geschichte, II. 382, cited by Christian).

8. Another Baptist that was tormented by those influenced in Zwingli's Zurich was Balthasar Hubmaier.

He was a very learned man and had been a close friend with Zwingli in earlier days, and they had fought together against Roman Catholicism. But Hubmaier desired to follow the Bible in all matters and he rejected infant baptism and became a Baptist.

He wrote powerful books in defense of his faith and one was in defense of believer's baptism. He said, "The command is to baptize those who believe. To baptize those who do not believe, therefore, is forbidden." He was right.

He also wrote one against persecution, titled "Concerning Heretics and Those That Burn Them." He taught that it is not the will of Jesus Christ to put men to death for their

beliefs, that the churches are in the business of saving men, not burning them.

He was thrown into prison by the Zurich Protestants in January 1526 and kept there for four months. His appeal to his old friend Zwingli was ignored. His wife also was in prison and his health was broken. He had just gotten over a sickness that was almost unto death.

In this sad and discouraged condition, he was tortured on the rack by the Protestant authorities; and on April 6, 1526, the broken man agreed to recant his beliefs.

The people of Zurich were summoned to the cathedral to hear the recantation of this well-known Baptist preacher. Zwingli first preached a sermon against the heretics. Then every eye turned to Hubmaier, who went forward to read the recantation. As he began to do so in a trembling voice, he broke down weeping. As he swayed to and fro in agony, he was suddenly strengthened by the Lord. He shouted, "*Infant baptism is not of God, and men must be baptized by faith in Christ!*" Pandemonium broke out! Some screamed against him while others shouted applause. The Zurich authorities quickly took him back to the dungeon.

There he wrote these blessed words of prayer to God: "O, immortal God, this

is my faith. I confess it with heart and mouth, and have testified it publicly before the Church in baptism. I faithfully pray thee graciously keep me in it until my end, and should I be forced from it out of mortal fear and timidity, by tyranny, torture, sword, fire or water, I now appeal to thee. O, my compassionate Father, raise me up again by the grace of thy Holy Spirit, and suffer me not to depart without this faith. This, I pray thee from the bottom of my heart, through Jesus Christ, thy most beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour. Father, in thee do I put my Trust, let me never be ashamed."

That prayer was answered, because Hubmaier went on for the Lord and was faithful unto death. After he was allowed to leave Zurich, he moved to Moravia, where he had a very fruitful ministry and a harvest of souls were brought to the Lord.

On March 10, 1528, in Vienna, he was burned to death at the stake, and he died in the faith that he preached. His faithful Christian wife was drowned eight days later.

9. About that time, Zwingli wrote a vicious book against the Anabaptists called Elenchus contra Catbaptistas, or A Refutation of the Tricks of the Catabaptists or Drowners. He called Anabaptists "wild asses" and other insulting terms and said their immersions were from

Hell and that the Anabaptists themselves would go to Hell.

10. About that time, persecution was instigated against Baptists in St. Gall, Switzerland.

Baptist preachers such as Konrad Grebel and Eberle Polt were preaching with great success at St. Gall and thousands from throughout that part of the country were confessing Christ and taking believer's baptism.

At the instigation of Zwingli, the St. Gall city council determined to persecute them by drowning if they refused to leave the territory. On September 9, 1527, they issued the following decree:

"In order that the dangerous, wicked, turbulent and seditious sect of the Baptists may be eradicated, we have thus decreed: If any one is suspected of rebaptism, he is to be warned by the magistracy to leave the territory under penalty of the designated punishment [to be drowned]. Every person is obliged to report those favorable to rebaptism. Whoever shall not comply with this ordinance is liable to punishment according to the sentence of the magistracy. Teachers of rebaptism, baptizing preachers, and leaders of hedge meetings *are to be drowned*. Those previously released from prison who have sworn to desist from

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such things, shall incur the same penalty. Foreign Baptists are to be driven out; if they return *they shall be drowned*. No one is allowed to secede from the [Zwinglian] church and to absent himself from the Holy Supper. Whoever flees from one jurisdiction to another shall be banished or extradited upon demand”

The decree on March 26, 1530, was even more severe: “All who adhere to or favor the false sect of the Baptists, and who attend hedge-meetings, shall suffer the most severe punishments. *Baptist leaders, their followers, and protectors shall be drowned without mercy*. Those, however, who assist them, or fail to report or to arrest them shall be punished otherwise on body and goods as injurious and faithless subjects.”

11. This Protestant inquisition was very similar to the Roman Catholic one. The Protestants required that every citizen submit to their doctrine and practice upon pain of death. They required that every citizen become a spy to report on the presence of dissidents. Not only were the dissidents persecuted, so were those who helped them in any way, including those who even failed to report them.

12. Zwingli was a hypocrite in the matter of persecution. He spoke against the Catholics when

they persecuted Protestants, but he supported the persecution of Baptists. In his sixty-seven theses against Rome, Zwingli had said: “No compulsion should be employed in the case of such as do not acknowledge their error, unless by their seditious conduct they disturb the peace of others.” Yet, he ignored his own rule and compelled others to believe as he did. The Baptists were not seditionists. They were not trying to overthrow the government. They merely desired to practice their own faith in peace.

13. Protestant persecutions in Switzerland continued in the 17th century. “At the council of Geneva, 1632, Nicholas Anthoine was condemned to be first hanged and then burned for opposing the doctrine of the Trinity; and at Basil and Zurich, since the Reformation, heresy was a crime punishable with death, as the fate of David George and Felix abundantly prove” (J.J. Stockdale, **The History of the Inquisitions**, 1810, p. xxviii).

14. As late as 1671, seven hundred persons, homeless and destitute, were driven out of Berne. Great was the suffering of old and young (Richard Cook, *The Story of the Baptists*, 1888, p. 65).

Lutherans In Germany Were Persecutors

1. A look at Martin Luther’s position on

persecution is important to understand that Luther changed his position in many important ways. In the early days of his reformation, for example, Luther taught that the proper mode of baptism is immersion.

He changed in regard to baptism. In his German New Testament, he translated baptize as “dip,” which is a good translation in that the term means to put into the water and take out of the water. The term “immersion,” on the other hand, does not have the connotation of taking out of the water.

In 1518, he taught not only that the word “baptize” means to immerse but that the significance of the ordinance points to immersion. “That also the signification of baptism demands, for it signifies that the old man and sinful birth from the flesh and blood shall be completely drowned through the grace of God. Therefore, a man should sufficiently perform the signification and a right perfect sign. The sign rests, in this, that a man plunge a person in water in the name of the Father, etc., but does not leave him therein but lifts him out again; therefore it is called being lifted out of the font or depths. And so must all of both of these things be the sign; the dipping and the lifting out. Thirdly, the signification is a saving death of the sins and of the resurrection of the grace of God. The

baptism is a bath of the new birth. Also a drowning of the sins in the baptism” (Luther, *Opera Lutheri*, I. 319. Folio edition). Luther sounds like a Baptist here, but at the same time, he defended the unscriptural practice of baptizing infants; and he soon gave up the debate on baptism and became an enemy of the Anabaptists.

Luther also changed in regard to persecution and bloodshed. Early on in his reformation career, Luther did not support the death sentence against false teachers, though he supported their persecution short of death and their banishment. “Though naturally of a very warm and violent temper, he was averse to punishing heretics with death. He says in his writings, I am very averse to the shedding of blood, even in case of such as deserve it; I dread it the more, because, as the Papists and Jews, under this pretence, have destroyed holy prophets and innocent men, so I am afraid the same would happen amongst ourselves, if, in one single instance, it should be allowed to be lawful to put seducers to death. I can, therefore, by no means consent that false teachers should be destroyed. But as to all other punishments, he seems to think they may, lawfully, be employed: for after the above passage, he adds, it is sufficient that

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they be banished. Agreeably to these principles, he persuaded the electors of Saxony not to tolerate, in their dominions, the followers of Zuinglius, in their opinion of the sacrament; nor to enter into any terms of union with them, for their common defence against the attempts of the catholics to destroy them. ... He also wrote to Albert, Duke of Prussia, to persuade him to banish them from his territories” (J.J. Stockdale, **The History of the Inquisitions**, 1810, pp. xxvii, xxviii).

Luther changed dramatically later on. He supported the utter destruction of the revolting peasants. “But when the peasants of Germany tried to apply this ‘liberty’ to themselves by overthrowing the tyrannical lords and gaining their independence, Luther raged against them: ‘The peasants would not listen; they would not let anyone tell them anything; their ears must be unbuttoned with bullets, till their heads jump off their shoulders. ... On the obstinate, hardened, blinded peasants, let no one have mercy, but let everyone, as he is able, hew, stab, slay, lay about him as though among mad dogs, so that peace and safety may be maintained... etc.’” [Martin Luther, *Werke*, Erlangen edition, vol. 24, p. 294; vol.15, p. 276; *passim*.]

Luther’s writing on the peasant wars are full of such expressions as the above. When he was in later years reproached for such violent language, and for inciting territorial lords to merciless slaughter (they killed over 100,000 peasants), he answered defiantly: ‘It was I, Martin Luther, who slew all the peasants in the insurrection, for I commanded them to be slaughtered. All their blood is upon my shoulders. But I cast it on our Lord God who commanded me to speak in this way. [Martin Luther, *Werke*, Erlangen edition, vol. 59, p. 284] (William McGrath, *Anabaptists: Neither Catholic nor Protestant*.

Luther also turned against the anabaptists he had once sympathized with. “Sadder yet, Luther reacted with equal violence to the Anabaptists who tried to apply the principle of ‘liberty’ to themselves. Though he knew there were both nonresistant, harmless Anabaptists as well as a radical fringe of social revolutionaries, he condemned all together — favoring a policy of extermination” (William McGrath, *Anabaptists: Neither Catholic nor Protestant*.

2. In 1529, the imposing *Diet of Speirs* (Speyer) pronounced the death sentence upon all Anabaptists. This council was composed of both Roman Catholic and Protestant princes and heads of state.

They hated each other and did not get along even in this Diet, but they hated the Anabaptists even more!

3. The proclamation of the Diet greatly accelerated the program of extermination already in progress.

“Four hundred special police were hired to hunt down Anabaptists and execute them on the spot. The group proved too small and was increased to one thousand. ... thousands of Anabaptists fell victim to one of the most widely spread persecutions in Christian history. Burning faggots and smoldering stakes marked their trek across Europe” (Halley).

4. In 1538, the Lutheran Elector of Hesse in Germany wrote to King Henry VIII of England and urged him to persecute the Anabaptists. He testified: “There are no rulers in Germany, whether they be Papists or professor of the doctrines of the Gospel [Protestants], that do suffer these men if they do come into their hands. All men punish them quickly. We use a just moderation, which God requireth of all good rulers. If any do stubbornly defend the ungodly and wicked errors of that sect, yielding nothing to such as can and do teach them truly, these are kept a good space in prison, and sometimes sore punished there; yet in such sort are they handled, that death is long deferred, for hope of amendment; and as long as any hope is, favour

is showed to life. If there be no hope left, then the obstinate are put to death” (Evans, **The Early English Baptists**, chapter 2). That was Protestant “moderation”!

5. “Seckendorf also tells us, that the Lutheran lawyers of Wittenburg, condemned to death one Pestelius, for being a Zuinglian, though this was disapproved by the elector of Saxony. Several of the Anabaptists were also put to death, by the Lutherans, for their obstinacy in propagating their errors” (J.J. Stockdale, *The History of the Inquisitions*, 1810, p. xxviii).

6. **Urbanus Rhegius** was a Lutheran leader in Augsburg who persecuted Baptists. He published a book against the Baptists in 1528. The illustration on the title page demonstrated the hatred of the Lutherans against this sect. It shows a river running into a large ocean-like expanse of water. The Baptists are depicted tumbling into the water and then being carried out to sea into a flaming fire. Thus, the waters of believer’s baptism are described as the pathway to Hell. This was a standard Protestant position in that day.

Rhegius was the chief instigator of persecutions in the Protestant city of Augsburg. Historian Philip Schaff, who was

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a Lutheran himself and certainly was not prejudiced against Protestants, said, "Rhegius stirred up the magistrates against them" (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, VI. 578). Hans Koch and Leonard Meyster were put to death in 1524.

Rhegius caused Baptist Pastor Hans Denk to be driven out of the city in 1527.

He caused Pastor Langenmantel to be arrested and banished in October of that year. Leonard Snyder was put to death in 1527.

Many died in prison, including Hans Hut, whose dead body was burned in the public square in Augsburg.

Baptist pastor Seebold was put to death in April 1528, and 12 more were killed later that year.

Many were tortured and branded. One had his tongue cut out for speaking against infant baptism.

7. The Lutheran reformer *Osiander* in Nuremberg, Germany, persecuted and threatened death to Anabaptists in his area. Hans Denk, who later pastored the large Baptist church in Strasburg, was appointed principal of the Lutheran St. Sebald's school in Nuremberg. At that time, Denk was just beginning to come to the formation of his Anabaptist views and he soon came

into conflict with the Protestants.

In January 1525, Denk was banished from the city by Osiander and was warned that if he ever again came with 10 miles of it, he would be put to death.

Denk moved to Augsburg, was baptized by the Anabaptist preacher Hubmaier, and became the pastor of a strong Baptist church in that city numbering 1,100.

Eventually, the aforementioned Lutheran leader Urbanus Rhegius persecuted Denk out of Augsburg.

8. Another well-known Lutheran leader was Martin Bucer (1491-1551). He was influential in Augsburg, Germany, and sought to have the city council persecute the Anabaptists.

Bucer was constantly frustrated with the city Council because they hesitated to persecute the Anabaptists as fiercely as he desired, calling this "the sin of the Senate."

In the case of Pilgram Marbeck and others, he was successful.

Marbeck was a noted civil engineer who had been forced to flee Catholic-controlled Tyrol because of persecution.

He arrived in Augsburg in 1530 and preached boldly not only against Rome's errors but also against those of the Protestant Reformers.

When he published two

books defending his views in 1531, the city council forbade their distribution and summoned him to give account.

Bucer was there and opposed him, and on December 18, the council banished the Anabaptist preacher in the midst of winter, Bucer supporting the cruel decree.

In 1529, the Protestant-influenced council in Augsburg imprisoned Anabaptist preachers Jacob Kantz and Reublin in dank cells in the tower. Kantz had called the Reformers "unskilled carpenters, who tear down much, but are unable to put anything together." It was a true sentiment from a Baptist point of view, but the Protestants didn't care much for it.

While in prison, the Baptists wrote in defense of believer's baptism as a symbolic expression of internal faith in Christ. They said that "faith confessed is wine, and baptism is the sign hung out to show that wine is within."

In 1534, the city Council drove all of the Baptists from the city with only eight days warning.

The next year, the Protestant city council proclaimed that all infants must be baptized or the parents would be punished, and no one was to give any shelter or assistance to Anabaptists.

In 1538, not having gotten rid of all of the hated Anabaptists, the council of Protestant Augsburg pro-

claimed that those who returned to the city the first time would lose a finger, be branded in the cheek, or put in the neck-iron. If they returned again, they would be drowned. With a straight face, the proclamation added, "We do this, not to make men believe as we do. It is not a matter of faith, but to prevent division in the Church." Well, the division had to do strictly with matters of faith!

John Calvin In Geneva Was A Persecutor

1. Calvin enforced Christian doctrine and principles at the point of the sword. In October 1563, the Geneva government burned to death Michael Servetus for heresy. Servetus held unitarian views and was definitely a false teacher, but the New Testament nowhere instructs the churches to kill false teachers. Servetus' death sentence was supported not only by Calvin, but also by Melancthon in Germany and Bullinger in Geneva and by other Protestant leaders who were consulted about the case.

2. Other men were also put to death under Calvin's tenure. "So entirely was he in favour of persecuting measures, that he wrote a treatise in defence of them, maintaining the lawfulness of putting heretics to death; and he reduced these rigid

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Obama Is the Most Pro-Abortion Candidate Ever. — Barack Obama is the most pro-abortion presidential candidate ever. He is so pro-abortion that he refused as an Illinois state senator to support legislation to protect babies who survived late-term abortions because he did not want to concede — as he explained in a cold-blooded speech on the Illinois Senate floor — that these babies, fully outside their mothers' wombs, with their hearts beating and lungs heaving, were in fact "persons." "Persons," of course, are guaranteed equal protection of the law under the 14th Amendment. — CNS

Christians Under Siege in Indian State. -- Three days of violence against Christians in India have raised fears that the recent election victory of a Hindu hard-liner in India's most-developed state may be prompting other activists to turn on non-Hindu minorities. A curfew has been imposed in a remote part of eastern Orissa state after clashes over the

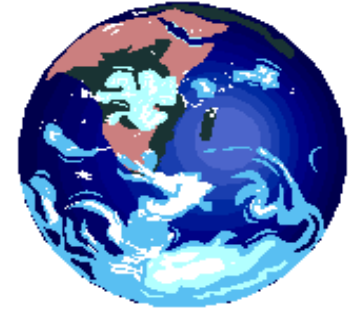
World News Roundup

Christmas holiday that reportedly left at least one and possibly three people dead. Up to 12 churches and dozens of homes of Christians were ransacked or torched, state officials and Christian groups reported. India is predominantly Hindu, although the affected district has a population of more than 100,000 Christians out of a total of 650,000 people. AICC secretary Sam Paul said in the letter that three Christians had been shot during the clashes, and that Hindu fundamentalists had been "roaming about disturbing the peaceful celebrations of Christmas at gunpoint." He had also received reports about a boy being abducted by assailants who "tried to burn him alive. He survived, it seems. The Hindu attackers are announcing openly, even on television, that every person who becomes a Christian becomes an enemy," he said. Matish Junni, shaved his head and paraded him around his local village. It said Junni, who pastors 25 local believers, had just days earlier begun construction on a small church building. "The extremists who attacked the pastor on Sunday demanded that the church members halt construction immediately," Gospel for Asia said. Hindu

hard-liners accuse Christians of luring low-caste Hindus to convert to Christianity. In Orissa, police permission is required before a person can change religion. In 1999, Hindu radicals in Orissa set alight a car in which an Australian Baptist missionary who ran a leprosy hospital was sleeping, along with his two young sons. All three were killed. — CNS

Wheaton College Professor Calls On School To Allow Roman Catholic Teachers. — Wheaton College professor Alan Jacobs has called on the school to open its doors to Roman Catholic professors. The call was motivated by the 2004 dismissal of Joshua Hochschild, who was fired after he joined the Roman Catholic Church. Hochschild left Wheaton in 2005 and joined the faculty of Mount Saint Mary University in Maryland. — FBIS

New Zealand Bans Spanking. — This year three more countries banned spanking of children. In May New Zealand became the first English-speaking



country to ban the practice. Over the past two months Uruguay and Venezuela have followed suit. New Zealand's Crimes Amendment Act of 2007 abrogates section 59 of the Crimes Act of 1961 which allowed the "use of force" for correction of children. Activists such as Save the Children have fought to ban corporal punishment for decades. There are now 22 nations that ban spanking by law. Sweden was the first in 1979. Other nations are Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, the Netherlands, and Ukraine. Humanists are fighting throughout the world to ban this practice, and the United Nations is pushing this agenda. It is a direct attack on God's Word which exhorts parents, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15). — FBIS

(See **WNR** on page 15)

La Voz Del Desierto



¿Es Bíblica la Pena de Muerte?

Parte #1

La pena capital fue abolida en Puerto Rico en 1929. Aunque hay crímenes federales que pueden ser castigados con la muerte, la Constitución del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, prohíbe la pena de muerte. Varias iglesias y organizaciones tales como la American Civil Liberties Union, el Colegio de Trabajadores Sociales, el Colegio de Tecnólogos Médicos, la Asociación de Psicología, la Coalición Puertorriqueña contra la Pena de Muerte y el Colegio de Abogados, son conocidos por su protesta contra la pena de muerte. Pero, ¿quién dijo que en Puerto Rico no existe una pena de muerte? En Puerto Rico existe una pena de muerte, de forma ilegal, que se aplica al inocente y no al criminal. El ciudadano decente tiene que estar confinado tras las rejas de su casa porque teme salir a caminar de noche, porque los criminales se creen dueños de la calle. De hecho, Puerto Rico es

uno de los países más violentos del mundo (**El Nuevo Día**, 21 de abril de 2006).

Muchos sugieren que para proteger a la sociedad de los criminales, no es necesaria la pena de muerte porque hay otros medios eficaces para conseguir esa defensa. Pero, ¿cuáles? Unos recomiendan la activación de la Guardia Nacional. Pero otros se oponen como el mismo superintendente de la policía, Pedro Toledo, diciendo que es costoso e innecesario. Otros recomiendan sentenciar a la persona a cadena perpetua. Pero, ¿y qué hay de los que están dentro de las cárceles? No sólo me refiero a los confinados sino también a los guardias penales. Los podrán encerrar para siempre pero eso no significa que no van seguir matando tanto dentro como fuera de la cárcel. Como fue el caso de Clarence Ray Allen, un hombre condenado en el Estado de

California por ordenar el asesinato de tres personas cuando estaba preso por otro asesinato.

Por último, otro medio que sugieren es la incrementación de policías. Sin embargo, “*Puerto Rico tiene de la tasas de policías más altas del mundo y todavía hay gente diciendo que necesitamos más policías. Eso sería convertir esto en un estado policiaco*”, dijo Salvador Santiago Negrón, presidente de Coprevi. Por lo tanto, parece que nada de lo que sugieren los opositores de la pena de muerte funciona.

Así que, ¿cuál es la verdadera solución y la respuesta para acabar con la violencia nuestra de cada día? “*El que derramare sangre de hombre, por el hombre su sangre será derramada; porque a imagen de Dios es hecho el hombre*” (Génesis 9:6). Dios no sólo aprueba la ejecución oficial del que ha sido culpable por un crimen

capital, sino que también promete bendecir a la nación que obedece Su mandamiento diciendo: “*y te irá bien*” (Deuteronomio 19:11-13). La implicación también aquí es que la nación o el estado que no obedece Su mandamiento “*no le irá bien*” (Proverbios 21:7). Sin embargo, según el presidente del Colegio de Abogados, Julio Fontanet, la pena de muerte no va a reducir la incidencia criminal en Puerto Rico: *Todo lo contrario, en países donde existe la pena de muerte existe una mayor incidencia criminal que en aquellos países en donde no existe.* Sin embargo, es interesante notar que cuando los sentimentalistas del 1960 y 1970 quitaron la pena capital en Estados Unidos, fue precisamente en esos años que el asesinato en América literalmente se triplicó. Mientras más las ejecuciones disminuyen en esa nación, más son los homicidios. Mientras que en nuestra pequeña Isla desde que fue abolida la pena de muerte en 1929, tampoco le ha ido muy bien. De hecho, está siendo asediada por una ola de violencia que ha cobrado 42 vidas en los primeros 12 días del 2007.

(Vea **PENA** en la pág. 10)

PENA . . .

(Vino de la pág. 9)

Este número de asesinatos es tres veces mayor que el de civiles que han perdido sus vidas en las calles de Irak en ese mismo período.

Si se puede probar que el asesinato de una vida inocente ha sido prevenido por un criminal entonces por supuesto que la pena de muerte podría reducir la incidencia criminal en nuestro país. Citamos un caso que demuestra que la pena de muerte si es un intimidatorio y disuasorio contra el crimen. En el **Oakland Tribune** del 7 de mayo del 1967, apareció una carta escrita para el gobernador Ronald Reagan, de la Sra. Wanda Kuczynski, fechada el 16 de abril de 1967. Ella escribió lo siguiente:

“... usted salvó la vida de mi esposo el pasado domingo cuando un bandido lo derribó al suelo, se sentó sobre él y alzando su cuchillo a lo alto dijo: ‘Te voy a matar.’ Mi esposo, mientras luchaba para detener su mano le respondió: ‘Me podrás matar, pero si lo haces vas a ir a la cámara de gas letal?’ ¿Te gusaría ir a la cámara de gas letal?’ Mi esposo dijo que debido a estas palabras le mano que sujetaba la cuchilla tembló y aunque la lucha continuó por el revolver y el dinero, la cuchilla fue puesta abajo. Luego luego la policía y arres-

taron al hombre y a sus acompañantes. Cuando mi esposo se levanto otra vez me dijo: ‘el gobernador Reagan salvó mi vida.’ Es la vida de un hombre bueno y honesto que trabaja duro para vivir. Una vida que vale la pena salvar. Lo mejor que nos ha ocurrido es cuando usted se convirtió en nuestro gobernador. Le doy gracias con todo mi corazón y oro para que el Señor lo bendiga.”

Por lo tanto, la ejecución es necesaria porque sirve de escarmiento y freno a futuros criminales. Si una persona sabe que pondrá en peligro su vida si mata a alguien, habrá mucho menos violencia porque entonces lo pensará dos veces antes de privar la vida de un ser humano. De hecho, detiene permanentemente a la persona que es ejecutada pues nunca más volverá a quitar la vida a una persona inocente. En fin, el que diga que la pena capital no reduce la incidencia criminal contradice las claras declaraciones del mismo Dios (Deuteronomio 19:19-20; Eclesiastés 8:11). Nuestro fracaso en administrar la pena de muerte ha motivado a individuos a cometer crímenes mayores. Más patrullas, más chalecos antibalas, más vigilancia es lo que se ha venido haciendo, y obviamente, no ha dado resultados.

[Continúa en la próxima mes.] — Por Hno. Félix M. González Bulgalá Redactor.

Viviendo Presos de Nuestras Conciencias

Es importante saber que cuando *no* limpiamos nuestra conciencia, *no* recibiremos respuestas a nuestros errores. Esto es grave, pero más grave es saber que todo esto nos separa de Dios trayendo a nuestras vidas consecuencias devastadoras. Pero Dios tiene la respuesta y la solución para esta situación.

Lo primero que debemos hacer es confesar ese pecado delante del Señor y arrepentimos del mismo. Mientras más pronto lo hacemos más rápido recibiremos respuesta (Proverbios 28:13; Hebreos 9:14). También recibiremos la paz y la bendición de saber que hicimos lo correcto, lo que agrada a Dios, y así dejaremos de arrastrar maldición y tropiezo a nuestras vidas. Tenemos formas de vencer al enemigo, tales como velar y orar (Mateo 26:41).

Sabemos que el Espíritu Santo mora en nosotros y que debemos alimentar nuestro espíritu a diario con oración, ayuno, lectura de

la Palabra, congregándonos, trabajando para el Señor en todo lo concerniente a la iglesia. Si no nos sometemos a la obediencia que Dios tiene para cada uno de nosotros, seremos presa fácil para Satanás (2da Pedro 5:6-8). Dios quiere que nos mantengamos firmes, clamando a Él en el momento de la tentación, y resistiendo los ataques en oración fiel y constante (Efesios 6:10-20).

Hermanos, debemos ser responsables y cumplir con el pacto que hicimos con Dios, en toda obediencia, sin comprometernos con el mundo. No dejemos que el enemigo de las almas nos arrebate lo que Dios tiene para nosotros. “Así que, amados, puesto que tenemos tales promesas, limpiémonos de toda contaminación de carne y de espíritu, perfeccionando la santidad en el temor de Dios” (2da Corintios 7:1).

[Por Hna. Jemar Montes, Redactora] ■

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CLOUD . . .

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theories to practice, in his conduct towards Castellio, Jerom Bolsee, and Servetus, whose fates are too generally known to require being here repeated. At the council of Geneva, 1632, Nicholas Anthoine was condemned to be first hanged and then burned for opposing the doctrine of the Trinity..." (J.J. Stockdale, *The History of the Inquisitions*, 1810, p. xxviii).

3. In the days of King Edward VI of England, Calvin wrote a letter to Lord Protector Somerset and urged him to put Anabaptists to death: "These altogether deserve to be well punished by the sword, seeing that they do conspire against God, who had set him in his royal seat" (John Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, Vol. 1, chap. 15).

4. Historian John Christian observes that Calvin "was responsible in a large measure for the demon of hate and fierce hostility which the Baptists of England had to encounter."

Persecution of the Calvinists In Holland Against the Arminians

"If we pass over into Holland, we shall also find that the reformers there, were, most of them, in the principles and measures of persecution. ... the most

outrageous quarrel of all was that between the Calvinists and Arminians. ... The moment the two parties had thus got a dogma to dispute upon, the controversy became irreconcilable, and was conducted with the most outrageous violence. The ministers of the predestinarian party would enter into no treaty; the remonstrants [non-Calvinists] were the objects of their furious zeal, whom they denominated, mamalukes, devils and plagues; animating the magistrates to destroy them; and when the time of the new elections drew near, they prayed to God for such men as would be zealous, even to blood, though it were to cost the whole trade of their cities. At length, a synod being assembled, acted in the usual manner; they laid down the principles of faith with confidence, condemned the doctrine of the remonstrants; deprived their antagonists of all their offices; and concluded by humbly beseeching God and their high mightinesses, to put their decrees into execution, and to ratify the doctrine they had expressed. The states obliged them in this Christian and charitable request, for as soon as the synod was concluded, Barnwelt, a friend of the remonstrants and their opinions, was beheaded, and Grotius condemned to perpetual imprisonment; and because

the dissenting ministers would not promise wholly, and always to abstain from the exercise of their religious functions, the states passed a resolution for banishing them, on pain, if they did not submit to it, of being treated as disturbers of the public peace" (J.J. Stockdale, *The History of the Inquisitions*, 1810, pp. xxviii, xxix).

Conclusion

All of this reminds me of the Lord's parable about the man who was forgiven of a debt. He owed his master 10,000 talents of silver, which is a huge amount of money, but when he could not pay and begged his master to have mercy on him, the master freely forgave him the entire debt. That same man turned around, though, and persecuted another man who owed him a very, very small debt (Matt. 18:23-35).

Likewise, the Protestants earnestly sought religious liberty from the Roman Catholics. When they obtained it, they refused to grant the same to the Baptists, though the latter pleaded with them humbly and quoted the Scriptures in a most sensible and godly fashion.

For example, when Hans Muller was brought before the Protestant city council at Zurich for his denial of infant baptism, he pleaded after this fashion: "Do not lay a burden on my conscience, for faith is

a gift freely from God, and is not a common property. The mystery of God lies hidden, like the treasure in the field, which no one can find, but he to whom the Spirit shows it. So I beg you, ye servants of God, let my faith stand free" (John Christian, *A History of the Baptists*). Muller's plea was ignored, as were those of tens of thousands of other Baptists of that day.

Upon the authority of the Lord's parable and the tenor of the entire New Testament Scriptures, we can be sure that the Lord did not look lightly upon this great sin and that He does not excuse it as many Protestant historians have done. Many plead "the ignorance of the times," but the persecuting Protestants of those times had the Bible and professed it as their sole authority for faith and practice. They therefore had no excuse for not knowing the will of the Lord. The times were very dark, but the Baptists, with the same Bible in hand, saw a greater light, and that light was the New Testament faith unvarnished by human tradition, and that faith gives no authority to persecute those who do not believe as we do. We can preach against error. We can discipline church members who sin. We can reject heretics. But we cannot lay hands on them and force them to believe as we do. That is the characteristic of a wolf, not a sheep. □

REVELATION . . .

(Continued from page 1

about many times in both the Old and the New Testaments before we reach this point in the Book of Revelation. For a few moments I want us to read several verses of Scripture, some in the Old Testament and some in the New Testament, referring to this.

Daniel writes: *"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him"* (Dan. 7:13).

In Zechariah we read: *"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn"* (Zech. 12:10).

In the Gospel of Mark we read: *"But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"* (Mk. 14:61-62).

Jude says: *"And Enoch*

also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 14-15).

For the last verses, we turn to the Book of Matthew. *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"* (Mt. 24:29-30).

This coming of the Lord that we have been reading about and that we read about in Revelation 1:7 does not refer to the Rapture. It refers to the public manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ that comes at the close of the Tribulation Period. One out of every 20 verses in the New Testament concerns the second coming of the Lord.

You remember that the coming of the Lord for His saints, which appears at the

Rapture, is a coming in which only the saints of the Lord will see Him. It is this coming that we read about in 1 Thessalonians 4 when all the dead in Christ shall be raised. They will be caught up together to be with the Lord, and all the saved that are living upon the earth shall be translated at the same time (Jn. 14:3; Phil. 3:20; 1 Cor. 15:23). Only believers will see the coming of the Lord then, but at the close of the Tribulation Period, the Lord is going to return to this earth with His saints, and every eye shall see Him (Jude 14; Col. 3:4; Rev. 19:11-14). It is at the end of the Tribulation Period that these Old Testament verses are fulfilled.

Who shall see Him? "Every eye shall see him" refers to the Gentiles; "and they also which pierced him" refers to the Jews. Such verses where it speaks about them seeing him, such as, "those that pierced him shall see him," and things of this nature (Jn. 20:23-29). These refer to the coming of the Lord at the end of the Tribulation Period. These two aspects or phases of the coming of the Lord are separated by a little more than seven years, the first taking place at the Rapture, the second at the end of the Tribulation Period.

Now this verse says: *"Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."* This does not say that all shall see

Him at the same time, nor does it say that all shall see Him in the same way, but it does say that every eye shall see Him. And that's true. Even those who are already dead, one day are going to have to look the Lord face to face. Every eye shall see Him, even those who are dead. Those who have already gone to hell, such as the rich man will, one of these days, have to see the Lord, for every eye shall see Him.

We read also that *"they shall look upon me whom they have pierced"* (Zech 12:10). This refers to the Jews. Those very Jews who participated in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those very Jews who, when Pilate said unto them, *"What shall I do with Jesus which is called the Christ,"* cried out: *"Crucify him, crucify him, his blood be upon us and upon our children."* They were responsible for the piercing of the hands and feet of the Lord Jesus Christ — that very group of Jews is going to see Him face to face. Every eye shall see Him, as we read in the book of Zechariah 12:10 and again when it says: *"And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."* One day they are going to see Him, the One that they pierced. This is talking about when Jesus Christ returns to this earth at the close of the Tribulation period and when

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every eye shall see Him.

It says “Behold, he cometh with the clouds.” Clouds always have a great significance in the Bible. They are particularly connected with the glory of the Lord. In the Book of Exodus. He says, “And it came to pass as Aaron spake to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold the glory of the Lord appeared in the clouds” (Ex. 16:10).

In Psalm 104 we also read that this is connected with the Lord: “Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind” (Psa. 104:3). The Lord uses the clouds for His chariot. Remember how many times that the appearances of the Lord upon earth have been connected with clouds. In the Book of Genesis the Lord made a covenant with Noah and all of his posterity. He said: “And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle and of every beast of the earth with you, from all that go out of the ark,

and to every beast of the earth; and I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen. 9:8).

God said, “This is a token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for perpetual generations. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token, a covenant between me and the earth, and it shall come to pass when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature and of all flesh and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Gen. 9:12-15). God then uses a cloud, or the rainbow in a cloud, as a covenant between Him and with all mankind to declare that never again will He destroy this world by means of a flood.

Then when we get to the children of Israel, we find in Exodus 13:21 that God speaks to them. He used a cloud as a guide for them and they were to move when the cloud moved, and stand still when the cloud stood still. God spake from Mt. Sinai and it was also with a cloud (Ex. 19:16-19).

In Exodus 16:16, “And

it came to pass on the third day of the morning that there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God and they stood in the nether part of the mount. And Mt. Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire. And the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake and God answered him by a voice” (Ex. 19:16-19).

We see how the Lord appeared at the mountain and spake unto them by means of thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount. We have the giving of the Law again and it was clouds that were there (Ex. 34:4-5). In the dedication of the tabernacle, at the completion of the tabernacle and after Moses and the priests had gone out, the cloud came in and filled the tabernacle so that they were not able to enter (Ex. 40:34-38).

At the dedication of the temple, the same thing occurred as the cloud moved in, signifying the visible presence of the Lord (1 Ki. 8:10-11). Concerning the offerings at the holy

place and the mercy seat, it says, “And the Lord said unto Moses, speak unto Aaron thy brother that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat which is upon the ark, that he die not, for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat” (Lev. 16:2).

In the New Testament we find the same true concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. At the Transfiguration of the Lord, and while the Lord was speaking to Peter, James and John upon the Mount of Transfiguration, God speaks to them. “While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him” (Mt. 17:5). God speaks from the cloud, the cloud again signifying the glorious presence of God Almighty. In Acts 1:9 we have the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. He ascended in the clouds as we read in Psalms 104:3 where it says that He uses the clouds as His chariot. “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). This is what we are to see in the future.

Jesus, speaking about His return says, “And

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Jesus saith unto him thou hast said nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mt. 26:64). Then, at the time of the rapture, "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds." So the clouds will become our chariot to heaven. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17).

There are some other uses that are connected with clouds in the New Testament. When it was time for the two witnesses to be raptured into heaven it says: "And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended unto heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them" (Rev. 11:12).

So we see that the cloud, as far as the believer is concerned, can be referred to as a glory cloud. It is a time of glory for God's people. A time of glory in the fact that they saw the Lord as He went away in the clouds of glory, and the promise is that He will one day return with the clouds of glory. At His return, we too will be caught up and will go to be

with Him in the clouds of glory. So it is a glory cloud for the believer.

Clouds have two different aspects. We speak often about clouds having silver linings, but sometimes the cloud that has a silver lining is the same cloud that has caused terrible destruction upon the earth. We may see clouds that have just wreaked great water damage upon the earth as they poured out their fury and caused floods, yet may have a silver lining and we may be able to see beauty in them. We realize that cloud that may be a beautiful cloud in one sense, can be a cloud of terrible catastrophe in another sense. The Lord says that these clouds, though they may be clouds of beauty for the believer, though they may be clouds that we might look forward to seeing, yet they are clouds that are threatening clouds for the unbeliever. They are clouds that the unbeliever should not look forward to, but rather should dread.

We read concerning these clouds, "For the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west. So shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Mt. 24:27). The lightning is that which strikes terror in the heart of people as they realize the lightning can do such damage, and it signifies the terrible storm of the wrath of God that is soon to fall upon this earth.

In the Book of Revelation we read, "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7). For the believer, these may be considered glory clouds. The Scripture that says "they also which pierced him," is referring to Jews who will see Him at that day. We will study this later on, that the Jews living at that day, will see Him "whom they have pierced." They will turn in repentance and faith and will be saved, and for them, it will be a glory cloud.

For Gentiles who have heard the gospel and who have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, it will not be a glory cloud. For them, it will be a cloud that will strike fear and terror within their hearts. It will be as though you were outside and suddenly you see a tornado moving down upon you. There's no place to hide; no place to run; no escape from the tornado. As it begins to pour down upon you, you are frozen within your tracks as fear comes upon you because of that tornado. This is exactly the way that it is going to effect those here upon this earth who know not Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. That cloud that brings glory to those who are saved, and that they look forward to, will strike terror into the heart of the unbelievers. We read concerning this,

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth

seal, and lo there was a great earthquake and the sun became black as sackcloth as hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind, and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains and the mighty men, and every bond man and every free man hid themselves in the dens in the rocks of the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:12ff).

"Behold, every eye shall see him" but they will not want to see Him. They are going to cry out for the rocks and hills and the mountains to fall upon them so that they might have the face of God hid from them because they will not want to see Him, because they are lost. They know that to look God in the face, as a sinner, is to undergo the awful judgment of the Lord Himself. For they said, "For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand."

Those who are saved,

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REVELATION . . .

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are going to look upon Him with great rejoicing; they're going to be glad to see the coming of the Lord. In fact, the Lord taught His people that this is what we are to pray for. If you go to the New Testament, you will see that this is what they looked forward to. Even John when he closed the writing of this book said "Even so, Lord Jesus, Come quickly," and they prayed to the Lord that His coming be soon. They also prayed "thy kingdom come." They looked forward to the coming of the Lord. "And it shall be said in that day, now lo this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9). I ask you Christian friend, are you looking for the coming of the Lord? The Lord in teaching His disciples to pray in the model prayer taught them to pray, "Thy kingdom come." Are you today praying for the soon coming of the Lord?

Well, you say "No, I'm not really, because I have many friends that are unsaved and things I wish to do." Well, so did they. The Lord tells us to look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be glorious. It will be the Lord coming in the glory clouds of heaven for you and me. It will be a glorious

coming. That verse said "Lo he is coming." Lo this is our God. We have waited for Him and He will save us. This is our Lord, we have waited for Him. We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Now that's one aspect of the coming, that's one look at the clouds. For you that are unsaved, it will not be something you can rejoice in. These are people who are rejoicing over the coming of the Lord, these people are rejoicing over seeing the clouds; they've longed for this; they've prayed for this; they're looking forward to this day. For you that are unsaved it will not be a day of rejoicing. It will be a day of terror; a day of fear. It says that you will cry unto the rocks and the mountains "fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand" (Rev. 6:16). And then God seals it. He puts His signature on it and says this is going to happen. "I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending saith the Lord which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty." God has signed it and says this is to come to pass.

God now places His seal upon all that is said in verse seven (1:8, 11, 17; 21:6; 22:13). "Alpha and Omega" are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, indicating the

completeness of God and His eternal existence (Isa. 41:4; 48:12). "Which is and which was, and which is to come" has been used to describe the Father, but it belongs equally to the Son. He is "the I AM" (Ex. 3:14; Jn. 8:24, 58). "Almighty" is used eight times in Revelation and includes the ideas of omnipotence and universal rulership.

Men may ridicule the second coming; men may make fun of the second coming, but God has signed here, right here, saying "I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending saith the Lord." He is coming, and every eye shall see him. Not all at the same time, but every eye shall see him. One of these days you're going to have to stand before God. You're going to have to look Him right in the eye. You may want to turn your eyes from Him; you may not want to look Him in the eye, but you're going to have to look Him in the eye. Then you're going to confess and acknowledge that you are guilty of all crimes charged; that you have sinned. You have broken God's laws, and worst of all, you have rejected Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. You will try to turn your eyes from Him and find that there is a force that will not let you turn away and you're going to have to look Him right in the eye, "Behold every eye shall see him."

Are you ready? Are you ready to look Him in the eye? Will you be crying out for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon you and hide you from the face of the Lamb? It's too late, because it is the day of judgment and "who shall be able to stand" the question is asked. The answer is "None!" No one! You're not going to be able to stand. The judgment of God is going to be poured out upon you. Are you ready? □

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Court Ends Bible Distribution in School.

— A rural school district's long-standing practice of allowing the distribution of Bibles to grade school students is unconstitutional, a federal judge has ruled. An attorney for the southeastern Missouri school district said Wednesday he will appeal the judge's injunction against the practice. For more than three decades, the South Iron School District in Annapolis, 120 miles southwest of St. Louis in the heart of the Bible Belt, allowed representatives of Gideons International to give away Bibles in fifth-grade classrooms. The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit two years ago on behalf of four sets of parents. In August, a three-judge panel of the 8th

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U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a temporary injunction against the practice. The district altered its policy, saying the Gideons and others were still welcome to distribute Bibles or other literature before or after school or during lunch break, but not in classrooms. On Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Catherine Perry ruled both practices were illegal and granted a permanent injunction. The purpose of both practices “is the promotion of Christianity by distributing Bibles to elementary school students,” Perry wrote. “The policy has the principle or primary effect of advancing religion by conveying a message of endorsement to elementary school children.” Mathew Staver, president of Liberty Counsel, a Florida-based law group that represented the school district, said he would appeal.

* * *

Joel Osteen Says Mormons Are True Christians. — In an interview with Chris Wallace on Fox News Sunday, December 23, Joel Osteen said that he believes Mormons are true Christians. When Wallace asked whether a Mormon can be classified as “a true Christian,” Osteen replied: “In my mind they are. Mitt

Romney has said that he believes in Christ as his Savior, and that’s what I believe. I’m not the one to judge the little details of [Romney’s religion], so I believe [Mormons are Christians] and Mitt Romney seems like a man of character and integrity to me...” (“Pastor Joel Osteen Speaks out on Mormonism,” OneNewsNow, Dec. 28, 2007). Osteen is the pastor of America’s largest church, the charismatic Lakewood Church of Houston, Texas, and it appears to me that either he is incredibly ignorant, incredibly gullible, or incredibly deceptive. Mormonism holds a false gospel and worships a false christ. Official Mormon doctrine claims that salvation is by works and that Jesus is the brother of Satan. Pastor Cooper Abrams III, an independent Baptist missionary in Utah, made the following important statement: “One question that I would ask all Mormons is this: ‘If I accept you as a Christian, will you accept me as a Mormon?’ Would you accept me as a Mormon if I reject Joseph Smith and all the LDS prophets as being prophets of God. If I do not believe in the Book of Mormon or the LDS Scriptures, baptisms for the dead, the temple endowments, the LDS gospel, would you accept me as a Mormon? The answer is obviously, you would not. In like manner, when Mormonism denies the Bible

and every Christian doctrine do you think that Biblical Christians should accept Mormons as Christians? Again the answer is very obvious, no we will not. You cannot legitimately claim to be Christians when you refuse to accept what the Bible teaches and what a true Christian believes. I would implore Mormons to honestly and openly examine their teachings about God and Jesus Christ and examine who the Bible defines as being a Christian. There is no benefit in calling yourself a ‘Christian’ when biblically you are not” (Abrams, *Are Mormons Christians?* 1996). — FBIS

* * *

Baptist Missionaries Murdered in Pakistan. — Arif and Kathleen Khan, missionaries out of Trinity Baptist Church of Montville, New Jersey, were shot to death in August of 2007 in their home near Islamabad (“The Believers,” *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 2007). The gunman was a Muslim from Waziristan, the tribal region between Pakistan and Afghanistan that serves as sanctuary for Al Qaida. Arif was born in Pakistani but he was an American citizen. He and Kathleen met at seminary and served in two other Muslim countries before settling in Pakistan eight years ago. Arif had previously been jailed for preaching the Gospel. The two people who led the shooter to the Khans’ house

were nominal Christians who had once attended Khan’s church. The church’s pastor, Alfred Martin, said: “He was a marked man. He talked of dying for Christ as though it was having a mole removed.” — FBIS

* * *

NEA Pushing Homosexual Agenda In Public Schools. — Despite opposition from much, if not most of their base, leaders of the National Education Association (NEA) are aggressively advancing the homosexual agenda in public schools. At their annual meeting in Philadelphia in early July, the NEA’s Executive Committee adopted three recommendations from the organization’s committee on sexual orientation and gender identification, but the move went largely unnoticed by the 9,000 delegates present at the Representative Assembly. The approved recommendations, which were delivered briefly in an Executive Committee report and did not require a vote of the assembly, call for the NEA to lobby for hate crimes legislation, boost the NEA website to “include all resources” devoted to homosexual causes and push for sexual orientation training to be a requirement for earning a teaching credential.

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Iran Urged to Stop Stoning People to Death.

— Human rights activists are demanding that Iran abolish its practice of stoning people to death. A new report, published Monday, comes as nine Iranian women and two Iranian men are now awaiting that “cruel and unusual” fate, Amnesty International said. AI calls stoning a “grotesque and unacceptable penalty” that should be halted immediately. The head of Iran’s judiciary in 2002 issued a moratorium on stoning, and the country’s Penal Code is due to be amended, Amnesty International said. But the moratorium on stoning is not always observed. Amnesty International said it welcomes Iran’s recent “advances toward reforms,” said Larry Cox, Amnesty International USA executive director. But Cox also called on the Iranian government to ensure that the new Penal Code does not allow stoning to death or other means of execution for adultery. Iran’s current Penal Code prescribes execution by stoning. According to Amnesty International, Article 102 of Iran’s Penal Code says that men should be buried up to their waists and women up to their breasts for before the stoning begins. Article 104, which refers to the penalty

for adultery, says the stones used should be large enough to cause pain but not so large as to kill the victim immediately.

* * *

Does God Love All Kinds of Music. — Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in California says: “God loves all kinds of music because he invented it all — fast and slow, loud and soft, old and new. You probably don’t like it all, but God does!” (Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, p. 65). Answer: God did create music and created man with a capability to create and enjoy it, but the world is no longer in the pristine spiritual condition it was when God made it. Man has sinned against God and has created a world in rebellion against Him and against His laws. The Devil is called “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 11:4) and “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). Music is one of the powerful influences in modern society, and there can be no doubt that the god of this world is intimately involved in helping wicked men create music that will satisfy their illicit lusts. The apostle John taught, “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 Jn. 5:19). If the whole world lieth in wickedness, what does that say about the

world’s music? Obviously man’s wickedness has corrupted the field of music as it has every other field. — FBIS

* * *

Federal Judge Upholds Texas’ Moment-of-Silence Law. — Texas students will be allowed to pray at the beginning of the school day, thanks to a federal judge who ruled in favor of the state’s moment-of-silence law. Atheists had argued that silent, private and voluntary prayer in school violates the U.S. Constitution. Texas Solicitor General Ted Cruz said prayer in school is voluntary and constitutional.” — AFA

* * *

Woman Says She Was Kicked Off Bus For Reading Bible. — A Fort Worth, Tex., mother of two said she was kicked off of a city bus for reading the Gospel of Matthew to her children on the way to church. Fort Worth Transportation Authority spokeswoman Joan Hunter told KRLD radio that Christine Lutz was being disruptive and was asked to get off

the bus. Lutz said that’s not what happened. “She (the bus driver) told me to stop reading the Bible, and that’s what I refused.” Lutz said, “If she had asked me to quiet down, that would have been a total different story.” Lutz called the transportation office to settle the issue. “The dispatcher actually told me that I am not allowed to read the Bible on the bus” she said. “And I said, ‘Well I guess you forgot what country you live in’.”

* * *

4-H Club Told to Leave God Out of the Equation. — Thanks to a complaint from one atheistic parent, a 4-H club in Virginia has been told it cannot meet in a church, cannot pray and cannot read the Bible. And new guidelines from 4-H headquarters restrict expressions of Christianity at every 4-H chapter because they can “create a barrier.” The Pathfinders 4-H Club in Henrico County Va., has emphasized community service for 17 years. But now one parent is objecting to the club doing community service “for the glory of God.” — AFA

The Word of God

The Word of God is the Christian soldier’s best weapon, and it is essential to have it with him always. In doubt it decides; in consultations it directs; in

anxiety it reassures; in sorrow it comforts; in failure it encourages; in defense it protects; in offense it is mightier than the mighty. □

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has been my experience that upon rejecting their belief I am accused of believing in a God who has changed. It is commonly understood by them that God's immutability, His changelessness, would include these miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. This wrong idea arises out of a misunderstanding of God's immutability. That God does not change has reference to His being, the attributes which define His Person, that He is holy and will always be holy, that He is just and will always be just, and that His power, knowledge, and presence are infinite and will always remain so.

In addition, God is unchanging in His purpose and in His motive, which is His own glory. Neither can God lie nor do anything which is contrary to His holy nature. Our God is the Rock, all His ways are perfect, and perfection has no need of change.

That God's changelessness does not include the miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit, or other supernatural manifestations by which God has marked His presence in the midst of His people, is abundantly evidenced by the scriptural record. Since the parting of the Red Sea or the dividing of the rain-swollen waters of the Jordan, has it ever been reported that God has repeated these miracles

with other bodies of water (Ex. 14:21; Josh. 3:15-17)? Neither has it been said that the Lord has manifested Himself to others as He did with the Israelites in the wilderness when He led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21). Since the time of Elijah, how many testimonies does the church have of men making their earthly departure in a whirlwind riding a chariot of fire (2 Ki. 2:11)? Why is it that we have no "medically" validated accounts of men being raised from the dead as the dead were raised by Elijah, Jesus, Peter and Paul (1 Ki. 17:21-24; Jn. 11:44; Acts 9:36-42; 20:9-10)?

Furthermore, why doesn't the Holy Spirit continue to mark His arrival by the sound of a roaring wind and tongues of fire resting upon the heads of those who are filled as He did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-3)? The answer is that God, according to the good pleasure of His will, has determined not to work after this manner any longer; and if He isn't bound by His immutability to continue this activity then clearly He isn't bound to continue any of the other.

Religious Experience Subject To Authority of Scriptures

Almost all who claim to have had an experience which they consider to be supernatural readily pre-

sume that the author of it is God. Those who seek to lead them to examine their experience in the light of God's word are perceived as challenging their integrity or questioning God or His power in some manner or another. Alternative explanations for what has occurred are summarily rejected and very shortly they are grounding their belief in the divine origin of their experience solely upon their having experienced it. How alien this notion is to the testimony of Scripture!

On the pages of the Bible we find that even the most credible experiences are counted as chaff before the "written" word of God.

This fact was most beautifully revealed by Peter when he recounted his experience with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-8). On this occasion he heard the voice of God speaking to him out of the cloud expressing His pleasure in

His Son. When writing of it later he told his readers that we have a "more sure word" than this and he identified this "more sure word" as the Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:16-21). Even though Peter was in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, he readily laid his "experience" at the feet of the only word that is to be our "sure word," the unadulterated word of God. It is this word alone that is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). It is with this word that the man of God is made "perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17).

Peter's example to us in this is to direct our attention to where it belongs when we seek a word from the Lord. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is

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Love Through Me

By Amy Carmichael

Love through me, Love of God,
Make me like Thy clear air
Through which, unhindered, colours pass
As though it were not there.

Powers of the love of God,
Depths of the heart Divine,
O Love that faileth not, break forth,
And flood this world of Thine.

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no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

Paul illustrates this command in his letter to the Galatians. Upon learning that false teachers had slipped in amongst them he said that even if he (the miracle-working Apostle of the Lord), or an angel from heaven, were to bring them a gospel other than the one already delivered — let them be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9). In writing this Paul clearly relegated the supernatural to the final authority of Scripture. Keep in mind that he wrote this when signs and wonders had a legitimate function in the church.

The Divine Purpose of Signs And Wonders

The question before us now is whether or not signs and wonders still have a legitimate function. Before this question can be answered we must discover

what the Scriptures reveal their function to be. Our search shall begin with Moses. Here was a man who had much experiential knowledge regarding this question. When God called him to return to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to let God’s people go, Moses, quite understandably, said to God, “But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee” (Ex. 4:1). God’s response was a command to throw down the staff that he held in his hand, and when Moses complied, it turned into a serpent. God told him that the purpose of this miraculous sign was, “That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee” (Ex. 4:5).

As can be seen from the above example, and elsewhere in the Scriptures,

the purpose of signs and wonders was to place a stamp of divine authority upon the ministers of God’s choosing and upon the word which they spoke. When Elijah raised a boy from the dead, the boys’ mother, familiar with God’s purpose for signs and wonders, exclaimed, “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth” (1 Ki. 17:21-24). In like manner, when the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon claiming to have a message from God, Gideon asked for a miraculous sign to confirm the message’s divine origin (Judg. 6:17).

This purpose did not change with the coming of the Lord. When Peter preached to the multitudes on the Day of Pentecost, he drew their attention to the signs and wonders as that which authenticated the ministry and message of Christ. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you” (Acts 2:22). When Jesus contended with the unbelieving Pharisees, He directed them to His miraculous works as well (Jn. 5:36; 10:25; 14:10-11).

Even the unschooled blind man whom Jesus has healed understood the relationship between miracles and a man sent by

God. When questioned by the Pharisees concerning the restoration of his sight, and becoming impatient with their unwillingness to accept that Jesus had performed this miracle, he told them, “Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing” (Jn. 9:32-33).

What was true with our Lord was also true of His Apostles. At the close of Mark’s gospel, after stating the church’s commission to preach the gospel in all the world, he wrote, “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mk. 16:20).

When Paul contended for the ear of the Corinthian’s in opposition to the “false apostles” who had crept into the fold and were seeking to lead them astray (2 Cor. 11:13-15), he argued for the validity of his apostolic ministry based upon the miracles. “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (2 Cor. 12:12). In direct contrast to the perception of most today, signs and wonders were not an end in themselves. It was not God’s purpose to merely put on a show for the entertainment of the crowds.

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The A-Bomb

The original Greek of Luke 21:26, where Jesus Christ speaks of the “distress of nations: the sea and waves roaring; men’s hearts withering away from fear, etc.”

If you read the line that follows: “For the powers of heaven shall be shaken” in the original Greek you will find that it says: “For the powers of uranium shall be shaken.”

Since the Greek for “heaven” is ouranos in the Greek the plural “powers of heavens” is used. Our nuclear scientists tell us that atomic energy is the power by which the whole cosmos (heavens) is kept together, and is different from any “power” we have on this earth, all of which is stored up from the sun’s rays.

— Converted Catholic Magazine

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Signs Always Accompany New Doctrinal Revelation

The next point which needs to be revealed, as we journey to a biblical understanding of this matter, is that signs and wonders *always* marked the ministry of one who spoke beyond what was already contained in the Scriptures. In other words, they always delivered a *new* message. When God had hidden Himself from a rebellious Israel the Psalmist cried out, "We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet ..." (Psa. 74:9).

Observe the association made between signs and a prophet. The prophet would bring a *new* word from the Lord. This is the consistent example of Scripture. Nowhere in the pages of the Bible do we ever find a man of God whose ministry is validated by signs and wonders simply reading out to the gathered crowd what was already contained in the scriptural canon (that body of writings which was understood to have been given by God). That which was accepted as being God's word had this acceptance because it had been delivered through men whose ministries were authenticated after this manner. Moses would be an example of this. The miracles which God worked through such men provided their writings with their own

validation.

In the writings of John we have a confirmation of the point just made. Once a message was validated it needed no further validation. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (Jn. 20:31-32). In other words, John is telling us not to expect further miracles to confirm what has already been confirmed by the miracles recorded. Understanding this we see how it is that signs and wonders always heralded a new message.

Before moving on, I want to look at a passage which shows that the people of God clearly made this association. This is seen in their response to the signs which accompanied the ministry of Christ. After Jesus had cast out a demon from a man, the crowd, "were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him" (Mk. 1:27). They expected "new doctrine" and Jesus met their expectations.

Dangers of Present-Day Claims

At this juncture, I pray that a sufficient foundation has been laid from the word

of God that the danger may be clear to all. That danger is that signs and wonders do not come alone. The word and testimony of God has been that they served to validate the ministry and new doctrine of one whom He has sent. Thus it necessarily follows that a present-day claim to being a vessel through whom God is working supernaturally is a claim to being the bearer of a new doctrine. To claim the first and deny the second is to reject the revealed purpose of God for signs and wonders. Let God be true and all those who pervert His word be found liars (Rom. 3:4).

The Gift of Tongues, Dreams And Visions

Among the sign gifts which marked the person as being a fellow-laborer in

the work of bringing a new word from the Lord, was the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 14:22). Because of the perverse counterfeit that is making its rounds today many seem to have forgotten that this gift was God the Holy Spirit speaking unerringly through men (Acts 2:4). And just as we saw regarding the other miracles, that they were not an end in themselves, so it is also with tongues. They were to be interpreted (1 Cor. 14:13), and the interpretation was to be delivered to the church for the edification of all (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:5, 12, 18-19, 26-27). What a sacred responsibility came with God's bestowal of this gift upon the one of His choosing!

Another of the sign gifts was God communicating through one by

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Big Versus Little Christians

By W. Lee Rector

A study of the characteristics of big and little Christians gives interesting contrasts:

1. Big Christians stand for the whole Word — little ones permit adulterations.
2. Big Christians set themselves for the defense of the Gospel — little ones belittle those who are zealous for it.
3. Big Christians back their pastor — little ones betray him.
4. Big Christians get

into their church's program — little ones stand on the sidelines.

5. Big Christians brave a battle for Christ's sake — little ones flee for self's sake.
6. Big Christians call for the whole gospel — little ones decry its full preachment.
7. Big Christians help if they can, underwrite church finances — little ones dodge the privilege of so doing.

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dreams or visions (Deut. 13:1). They acted as a sign because through them a future event would be revealed (Deut. 13:2), and no one could know the future except God (Isa. 41:22-23). After the sign came to pass, the dreamer of dreams would have the way opened to deliver his message to the congregation (Deut. 13:2-4). It is because the sign was only preparatory (the validation) to the delivery of the message that this person is identified as a prophet (Deut. 13:5; Num. 12:6). With both the gift of tongues and dreams, we have seen the consistency of God's purpose for signs and wonders confirmed.

The Closure of Scripture Canon Terminates Signs

To further buttress what has already been said, we might do well to note what the psalmist had to say in a Scripture quoted earlier. When there wasn't a new word from the Lord, neither were there any signs (Psa. 74:9). This has also been the consensus of the church today. Since the close of the apostolic age (the time of the Apostles), there haven't been any signs sent by God. His word in its fullness had been delivered and there was no longer any purpose for an Elijah or a Paul.

In response to those

who might argue that there was much revelation given by the Lord that was never intended to be included in the scriptural canon, I would say that it was just because the Bible was incomplete that God continued to speak outside of it. Furthermore, the message was always validated by a sign or wonder and so we return full circle to the purpose of signs and wonders which was to authenticate a *new* doctrine.

In the time of the Apostles, God spoke through many people outside of the circle of those whom the Lord used to write the Scriptures, but these men were called to assist in the enormous task of taking this new teaching to the tens of thousands of new converts who were spread all over that portion of the world. Their burden and need was the same as even Peter or Paul, and so the Lord confirmed the word which they spoke in the manner in which He always had. It is important to remember that outside of a few congregations, the New Testament Scriptures were found only upon the lips of those whom the Lord revealed them to.

The Termination of the Apostolic Office

As the church has long understood, the time of the Apostles was a transitional era. The qualifications for an Apostle were that he

had to have witnessed or seen Christ after His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22), and they had to be sent by the Lord (Gal. 1:1). Because the Lord didn't call Paul until much later than the rest, Paul speaks of himself as "one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:8). In the same verse he was the "last of all" seen by the Lord. By this we may safely conclude that there are no other Apostles, regardless of the claims of certain people today.

In confirmation of this we read that both the "household of God" and the walls of the New Jerusalem are built upon their labor (Eph. 2:19-20; Rev. 21:10, 14). The Apostles are at the foundation, not throughout the structure. They served the purpose of delivering to the saints the commandments that our Lord had given them (Acts 1:2), and to this day the temple of God continues to build upon this foundation as the Lord adds to our numbers those whom He brings to the faith through the new, now old, Apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).

Now we are no longer to seek a new word from the Lord, but rather we are called to "earnestly contend for the faith which was *once delivered* to the saints" (Jude 3). This "faith" is that body of doctrine which the Lord gave to the church through the Apostles.

Now let's take a look at some of the additional

biblical evidence that points to the termination of these supernatural gifts. We read that in the early days of Paul's ministry the Spirit was upon him in such power that even handkerchiefs which had touched his body were taken to the sick and they were healed (Acts 19:12). Toward the end of his life we read how he was unable to heal even those whom he dearly loved (Phil. 2:25-27; 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20). It is also important for us to keep in mind that God administered the Spirit to others in the church through the Apostles (Acts 8:18; 19:6; 2 Tim. 1:6). If we may conclude from the above Scriptures that Paul was losing or had lost his power to heal, then what does that say about those whom God empowered through them?

Another evidence is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians where he tells them specifically that "tongues, they shall cease" (13:8). In verse 10 he reveals that they will cease "when that which is perfect is come." A debate centers around whether this "perfect" has reference to when the Lord returns or when the scriptural canon would be complete. There is no need to be dogmatic about this latter interpretation, but it certainly fits with what we have seen to be God's purpose for sign gifts.

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The last evidence that we shall consider is found in the letter to the Hebrews where we read, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son ..." (Heb. 1:1-2). The meaning of this passage, as far as it bears upon our discussion, is that there has been a cessation of these former means by which God spoke. Once He had spoken in "divers" or various manners. Now He has spoken through His Son.

How Do We Explain The Present-day Phenomenon?

Being that the evidence is clear and that God has brought this activity to a close, why is it that denominations and individual congregations around the world are claiming that God is working signs, wonders and miracles in their very midst? Or, what answer do we have for the multitudes who report that they have been healed by God through modern-day faith-healers? And what can be said in response to the literally millions who assert that God has given them the gift of tongues, and that He speaks to them in dreams and visions? Trusting that Christ's sheep will hear His voice and will

never follow a stranger (Jn. 10:4-5), I would ask that you turn to where He speaks today, His written word, the Bible, and search the Scriptures that you may be equipped to discern the truthfulness of what I have to say.

A very short time after Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica, it appears that either a false apostle or a counterfeit letter claiming Paul as the author alarmed the believers there with a report that Christ had already returned (2 Thess. 2:1-2). In Paul's second letter to them he assured them that the Lord would not return until after there had been a great "falling away" within the church (2 Thess. 2:3). In the following verses Paul gives us very specific details as to how this "falling away" would be brought to pass:

"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:9-12).

I am certain that many shall gnash their teeth at this conclusion, but it is my hope that the Lord will use

His word to bring light that they may see the peril of their present beliefs. There are many people whom the Lord has saved and brought out of these movements.

In addition to the text which we just read, there are six other passages in Scripture which speak of signs and wonders in regard to the last days and *every single one* ties this phenomenon with the activity of Satan (See Mt. 24:24; Mk. 15:22; 2 Tim. 3:8; Rev. 13:13; 16:14; 19:20). This fact by itself should *alarm* any serious student of the word of God.

Explanation of 2 Timothy, Chapter 3

Before moving on, I want to develop one of the above-cited Scripture texts because lacking a key

piece of information, the passage will not be seen as confirming the purpose for which it was cited. I shall also develop it in its context because the context reveals just how descriptive it is of the pentecostal/charismatic movement. The text is 2 Timothy 3:8, and we'll begin with verse 1 of this chapter. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." In biblical usage "last days" indicates the period of time between Christ's first and second coming. In this instance the words "shall come" indicate a future time and this conclusion is supported by Paul's reference to the activity which we read out of 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 which shall usher in the return of

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The Prince of Peace

By William Jennings Bryan

Reared in the home of a carpenter, never having access to the wisdom of the past, never coming in contact with the sages of other lands, and yet, when only thirty years of age, He gave to the world a code of morality the like of which the world has never seen.

He preached for a few months and gathered around Him a few disciples. Then He was crucified; His disciples scattered and most of them put to death.

And yet from this beginning His religion has spread until hundreds of millions have taken His name with reverence upon their lips and millions have been ready to die rather than surrender the faith He put in their hearts.

How do you explain this fact in history? It's easier to believe Him Divine than to explain in any other way what He said and did and was. Christ has earned the title of "Prince of Peace." □

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our Lord.

In 2 Timothy 3 verses 2 through 4, Paul provides us with a lengthy list of ungodly fruits of certain evil men who are identified with these last days. "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." After this severe condemnation we are taken by surprise to read that these godless individuals are found within the pale of professing Christendom. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5). Considering this extensive catalog of unrighteousness, the only "form of godliness" that he could be referring to is purely superficial. They make a profession that they belong to Christ, they attend and are identified with the "church" community, and they are familiar with the Scriptures.

In response to those charismatics who interpret Pauls' words, "but denying the power thereof," as having reference to those who reject their belief in the perpetuity of the gifts, I would direct them back to

the context. In the three previous verses, Paul has been speaking on their lack of sanctification. The power which they deny is the power of Christ's death to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14). Christ not only took away our sins by His death, but He sanctifies us as well (Eph. 5:25-27). We have been predestinated to be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29), and so those who continue to live in sin are denying, by their life, God's power in sanctification.

In 2 Timothy 3:7, Paul tells us that these people are, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Why is it that they are never able to assimilate what they hear or read from the word of God? For the same reason that their lives have not been transformed — because they have never been born again by the Spirit of God, and the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him (1 Cor. 2:14). Anyone with a solid doctrinal foundation under them who has been exposed to the charismatic movement can readily attest to the proliferation of heresy within their ranks. Internationally known charismatic leaders deny the trinity, the substitutionary death of Christ, and other fundamentals of Chris-

tianity. Even one who was uncertain as to the perpetuity of these gifts would have to question how the "Spirit of Truth" could ever be found validating the ministries of those who have no regard for the truth.

Another readily apparent inconsistency is their focus upon and glorification of the Spirit. Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit would come to glorify Him (Jn. 16:14). The warning signs are everywhere for those who are willing to test the Spirit.

In 2 Timothy 3:8 we are provided with the information that ties these "last days" in with the time that Paul revealed in 2 Thessalonians would precede or usher in the return of the Lord. "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." It is at this point that we need to draw upon an extra-biblical source.

The names of Jannes and Jambres are found nowhere else in the Bible, neither are they identified in the context, but as any good Bible dictionary will confirm, they were the names given in Jewish tradition to the magicians who opposed Moses in Pharaoh's court. Take notice that Paul does not tell us that they will oppose a modern-day Moses who has been empowered by God to perform genuine signs and wonders, but

rather these children of the devil will oppose the truth. Their lying signs and wonders have the purpose of leading people astray. In light of their powerful delusions, it is a comfort to know that God's elect shall not be deceived (2 Tim. 3:9; Mt. 24:24).

The Erroneous View That Signs Strengthen Faith

Those who do not have a scriptural understanding of man's ruined condition, his consequent inability to do anything leading to or in cooperation with God to become saved, and our complete dependence upon Him to work in us to will and to act according to His good purpose, are prone to see in signs and wonders something which will enable or strengthen faith. I once thought the same way, but how distant this idea is from the truth.

Consider the Israelites who left Egypt under Moses' leadership. They saw with their own eyes the ten plagues which God visited upon Pharaoh and his nation. They witnessed the parting of the Red Sea. Every morning of the forty years which they spent in the wilderness began with their gathering of the manna which God miraculously provided. For this entire period of time their shoes and clothing did not wear out, yet we read in He-

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Thomas E. Corkish, Pastor.

DAY . . .

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days and three nights just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights. While it is acknowledged that the Jews reckoned any part of a day as a whole day, when the number of "nights" is

stated as well as the number of days, it requires a reckoning of a seventy-two hour period of time. If we take the term "three days and three night" literally, I see no way to get around doing so, then Jesus must have been crucified on Wednesday about 9:a.m., died at 3:p.m., and His body placed the tomb just barely before 6:00 p.m. This being so, He no doubt arose around 6:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter on Saturday as we reckoned time. Note carefully Matthew's statement in Chapter 28:1. □

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brews that they were not able to enter into the Promised Land because of their unbelief (Heb. 3:19)! What clearer testimony from Scripture do we need that miracles are not given by God for this purpose (1 Cor. 10:11). Consider the resurrection of Lazarus. Many of the Jews who witnessed this incredible miracle returned to Jerusalem and conspired with the Pharisees to put Jesus to death (Jn. 11:45-53).

To correct this erroneous focus, I would like to point out that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It is by this word and according to His will that God brings us to spiritual life (Jas. 1:18). If you desire to believe or strengthen your faith, then

diligently study the Scriptures, and cry to the Lord that He will give you the gift of faith (Eph. 2:8). Unless God blesses us with rebirth, His word will not be understood (Jn. 3:3; 1 Cor. 2:14). He has mercy upon whom He will have mercy (Rom. 9:18).

It was true in the time of our Lord (Mt. 12:39), it was true in the time of the Apostles (1 Cor. 1:22-23), and it is true today that, "and evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Mt. 12:39). Seeking after signs is the evidence of unbelief. God has spoken to us plainly in His word, and we are to walk by faith in His promises, and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:8-9). Christ's sheep hear His voice in the word and follow Him (Jn. 10:4, 27). Go to it now and hear the voice of God:

"I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophecy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? said the Lord. Is not

my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, ... that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord" (Jer. 23:23-32).

In conclusion I need to make clear that our God is a God who still heals. Perhaps daily God gives life to those whom the medical community has written off for dead. Even under more usual situations, our bodies do not mend on their own. It is God alone who sustains life; and all believers have access through Christ, if this need is ever laid upon us (Phil. 4:6).

May God enable all of you to hear the things which I have shared (Psa. 119:18; Lk. 24:45). To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. □

"Modernism has slapped God in the face, pushed Him out beyond the Great Dipper with Science, chased the devil into Africa to scare the heathen with, and is now trying to flag down a hell-bent world with a shirttail Bible.