

Zion's Advocate

*"And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day,
for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost...."*

1 Nephi 3:187

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THE BABE IN THE MANGER

A new star glistened overhead
Above a lowly manger bed,
Wherein in sweet and peaceful rest
The Son of God, lay sleeping.

While out upon the shepherd's plain
A messenger from heaven came,
In wond'rous light and majesty
A special vigil keeping.

Who spoke in clear and mellow tone
While all around him glory shown,
And dazed and trembl'ing shepherds knelt
In the dazzl'ing light.

"Fear not, ye men of Galilee
I bring good tidings unto thee,
To thee and all humanity,
On this most Holy Night.

For in the early hours this morn,
Behold! The Son of God was born
In yonder Bethlehem,
And by this shall ye know Him.

In swaddling clothes you'll find the Babe
And in a humble manger laid,
With lowing cattle standing by
And Mary, watching o'er Him."

—Helen Taubert

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ZION'S ADVOCATE IS...

To promote Jesus Christ as our only Saviour;
To promote His Teachings & His Church, the Church of Christ;
To be a voice of warning to His people; to be Zion's advocate.

The Meaning of CHRISTMAS

(from Santa Claus)



By Priest Glenn Orsted

Once again the holiday season is upon us. With it comes the conflict between Christmas and Xmas, the conflict between going into debt buying gifts and that of the nativity scene and a small child sleeping in the manger of an animal's stable, and the conflict between Santa Claus and Jesus Christ.

C. S. Lewis wrote a story

entitled *Xmas and Christmas*. The story takes place on the island of Niatirb, which is Britain spelled backwards. During the winter the inhabitants of Niatirb celebrated two holidays which fell on the same day, Exmas and Chrissmas. It took great preparations to be ready for Exmas, and weeks before the event the people packed the marketplaces finding gifts and cards for their friends and family. Before the big day there would be many parties with food and drinks in anticipation of Exmas.

On the same day of Exmas there was another holiday, that being Chrissmas. Chrissmas was a holy day, but by the time it arrived the people were so exhausted and distracted from the preparations for Exmas that they forgot about Chrissmas. And because they fell on the same date, people often confused them and combined them.

There is certainly legitimate concern for Christians at

“...Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without contrition.”

this time of year for everything that attempts to distract us from the true meaning of Christmas. On face value it would seem that Santa Claus is presented to distract our attention from the birth of that Child so many years ago; but what is

the truth about Santa Claus, and is there something of value in it for Christians? (Hint: I believe there is or you wouldn't be reading this.)

The story of Santa Claus started with the life of the real person St. Nicholas. There is not much known about this person, but he was the bishop of the church of Myra, a city on the southern coast of Asia Minor (part of modern day Turkey). He was a Christian leader when it was not only unpopular to be a Christian, but was, in fact, a crime. Under the rule of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, he was arrested and put into prison. He remained in prison until Constantine the Great became Emperor and accepted the Christian faith and released those imprisoned for their Christian beliefs.

That is all that history has recorded of this man. Legend is that upon his release he was known for his great generosity, and on one occasion gave his inheritance from his parents to a family with no money or food, and the father was about to sell his daughters into prostitution. He was known throughout the years in different cultures for his kindness and generosity. In Germany, he was Kriss Kringle, and the Dutch settlers here in America told of Sinter Klaas. It was during the 1800's in America that he was transformed into the jolly elf with a red coat, sleigh and flying reindeer. This was primarily from three sources: the stories of Washington Irving, the cartoons of Thomas Nast and the 1822

poem by Clement Moore, "*'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house....*"

So what can we learn about Christmas from Santa Claus? To adults, the story of Santa Claus is obviously absurd. But to children, they believe and many are devastated when they learn that Santa is not real. Here is our first lesson. The incredible faith of a child! It is no wonder that the secular interests of the world fight so hard to keep the Ten Commandments and any other Christian material out of schools. In their youth and at Christmas time we have the greatest opportunity to teach our children of the "truth" of Christmas that will last them throughout their lives.

The second lesson we learn is that whenever something or someone good occurs in the world, Satan will try to profane it. There are many false teachings about Christ that deny His miracles and teachings, but we cannot use that as an excuse to discard Christ. We must seek the truth. The same is true with Santa Claus (St. Nicholas). Just because the Santa in the store display mocks the birth of Christ does not mean we should forget the person that inspired a memory that lasted hundreds of years. We do not know what happened during his imprisonment, but it was common that if a person would deny Christ they would be released. Because St. Nicholas was not released we can assume with a degree of certainty that he held steadfast to his faith, even in the face of a

great trial. If we were to ask St. Nicholas about Christmas he might well refer us to First Peter 1:8 - "*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory....*"

The third lesson is that there is a huge difference between giving and exchanging. When you give, you do so with no expectation of return. If the stories of St. Nicholas are true, then he well understood this, and if we were to ask him about the spirit of holiday giving, he might well refer us to Acts 20:35 - "*I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"

A fourth lesson is that love can be costly. To love Santa Claus requires little. St. Nicholas's love of the Lord cost him unknown years of imprisonment. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German minister put into prison during the Nazi regime of World War II. In one of his books, *The Cost of Discipleship*, he compares between what he calls "cheap grace" and "costly grace." He says that cheap grace is that which believes that salvation comes easily, just by believing. In his words "cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without contrition."

"Costly grace," in contrast, declares that salvation is costly.

It cost God His only Son, and it demands obedience, that is, a life of discipleship – becoming a follower of Jesus Christ who takes up his cross and follows. It is hard to imagine Santa Claus in prison, but St. Nicholas' faith saw a devotion to Jesus Christ as being very costly – even worth the cost of persecution. He undoubtedly understood Acts 4:12 - *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* St. Nicholas might well refer us to First John 5:3-4 - *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”*

It is sad that what history has recorded as a loyal follower of Jesus Christ has come to have more in common with the commercialization of the American Christmas than he does with the struggles to keep the early church alive in the face of persecution. If Santa were to describe the way many Americans celebrate Christmas it might sound something like this:

“And there were in the same country children keeping watch over their stockings by the fireplace. And, lo! Santa Claus came upon them; and they were sore afraid. And Santa said unto them: ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which

be to all people who can afford them. For unto you will be given great feasts of turkey, dressing and cake; and many presents; and this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the presents, wrapped in bright paper, lying beneath a tree adorned with tinsel, colored balls and lights.’ And suddenly, there will be with you a great multitude of relatives and friends, praising you and saying, ‘Thank you so much, it was just what I wanted’” (Author Unknown).

The historical Santa might have pointed us to Jesus Christ with something like this:

Look to the manger, not the
mantle
See the Savior, not the
sleigh
Find the Redeemer, not the
reindeer
The One lying in the hay.

Try prayer instead of wish
lists
Give thanks to God above!
Try holiness this Christmas
And sacrificial love.

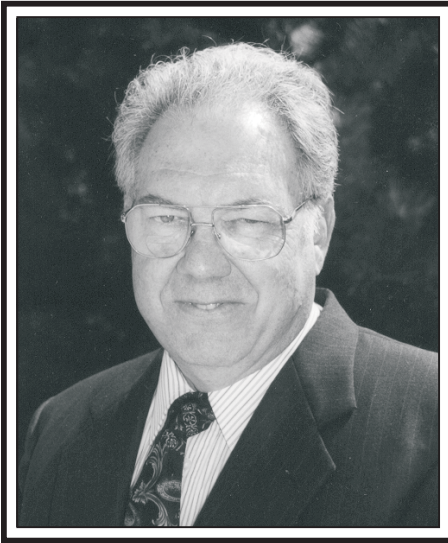
Worry more about your
lifestyle
Than a stocking full of coal
Confess your sins to Jesus
And he will make you
whole!
—(Author Unknown)

May each of you rejoice this holiday season in the knowledge of that gift from God of price without measure offered to all mankind. The world may try to hide, imitate and distract from it, but to those that seek it, it still gleams with brilliant light as the most prized gift under the tree – the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

**Merry Christmas and God's
Blessings in the New Year!**

THE GIFT AND SPIRIT OF REVELATION

THIS DOCUMENT WAS PREPARED FOR THE 2002 AUGUST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE
OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BY APOSTLE ROLAND SARRATT



By Apostle Roland Sarratt

ALMA'S BOLD TESTIMONY OF HIS GIFT OF REVELATION

Alma, the son of Alma, was also gifted with the spirit of revelation and prophecy and he tells us how he obtained that gift:

"Behold, I testify unto you, that I do know that these

PART #3

things whereof I have spoken, are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety? Behold, I say unto you, They are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days, that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me. And moreover, I say unto you, that as it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers, are true, Even so according to the spirit of prophecy, which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God, I

If we agree that we are all less than perfect in our understandings and we need help beyond what we can do ourselves to bring greater unity in the body, then perhaps we are at a point where the Lord can directly communicate His counsel and instructions.

say unto you, that I know of myself that whatsoever I shall

say unto you concerning that which is to come, is true, And I say unto you, that I know that Jesus Christ shall come; yea, the Son, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace, and mercy, and truth” Alma 3:76-83.

Mormon described the four sons of Mosiah and Alma which verified Alma’s statement:

“For they were men of a sound understanding, and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all: they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting, therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God” Alma 12:4, 5.

MORONI CONFIRMS THE IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION

Moroni addresses us knowledgeably and plainly on this important subject in his final exhortation:

“And again I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God. And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom; and to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; and to another exceeding great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. And again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles; and again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things; and again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits; and again, to another, all kinds of tongues; and again, to another, the interpretation of languages and of divers kinds of tongues. And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will. And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ. And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men. Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith, there must also be hope; and if there must be hope, there must also be charity; and except ye have charity, ye can in no wise be saved in the kingdom of God; Neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God, if ye have not faith; nei-

ther can ye if ye have no hope; and if ye have no hope, ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity. And Christ truly said unto our fathers, If ye have faith, ye can do all things which are expedient unto me. And now I speak unto all the ends of the earth, that if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief. And we be unto the children of men, if this be the case, for there shall be none that doeth good among you, no not one. For if there be one among you that doeth good, he shall work by the power and gifts of God” Moroni 10:8-20.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The above quote is sufficiently plain that any comment or explanation is not necessary. If there is anything to be said about Moroni’s exhortation it would be that he placed the responsibility of being spiritual men of God directly upon each one of us. We have no excuse. And so should it be. This is our time and our opportunity to prove that our conversion to the Holy Word of God is bearing fruit.

Up to this time we can say, with some reservations, that this church is a success story. We have survived. It should be acknowledged that our survival is not due to our own doings and abilities, but only by the grace of God and His purposes have

we escaped the great net of deception that would have taken us into that dreaded apostasy which has plagued the earth these many centuries. We cannot say why we, individually, are so favored, except our repeated acknowledgment of His blessings upon us may have won us some special consideration.

With this understanding as our basis for our existence we have reason to declare our love of God and our faith and hope in His promises to those who will hear our testimony. We have opportunity to respond to Him fully as an obedient people, and more particularly as obedient servants.

EXAMINING OURSELVES AND THE CHURCH

As we examine our individual selves and the church as a whole we might have reason to be concerned as to the high calling of our righteousness and holiness before the Lord. We might want to look at the evidences of our behavior and attitude and ask the question: are we proving to the world our claim to be the true Church of Christ? Do we have evidence of His direct communications to us currently declaring His particular will to this people? Only through His spoken and recorded word directed to us can we claim to have been especially favored of the Lord at this time.

Not one of us, including myself, can truly evaluate our status with the Lord by using our own human powers. We

would be presumptuous to try, and perhaps offensive to the Lord. Of course we have the word of God by which we can

We are cautious almost to a fault against deception and there is no true guide in doubt. We must be a believing people.

measure ourselves, but can we do it objectively without giving leniency to our own whims and wills? Why should we labor fruitlessly and inaccurately in such undertakings when the Lord Himself can speak fluently and far more effectively than any of us or all of us together? Why should He be mute to our needs? He is able and true to His word. He can give us answers directly in first person through revelation, and prophecy through any person that has sufficient faith in Him. Or He can enlighten our minds through His Holy Spirit by inspiration. He has many means to effectively communicate His will to us. It is our duty to be ready and willing to accept His counsel.

The challenge is great. I acknowledge that it is so much greater than I am personally able to meet. There are numerous roadblocks in my natural

attitude which have developed through the varied influences of this world. I realize that confessing my inadequacy might help me face the situation but it does not totally remove the roadblocks. Only the Spirit and power of God can do that.

THE GIFT OF DISCERNMENT NEEDED

The devil has done his work of producing changed and false revelation along with unauthorized offices and practices in the early church. The untiring efforts of our church fathers in this little remnant of the true church have given us a hope of freeing ourselves of the devil's work. Actually, we have been greatly blessed, but it appears that there are stigmas left that cripple our faith. We are cautious almost to a fault against deception and there is no true guide in doubt. We must be a believing people.

Although the world is reeling under many influences of deception, our greatest challenge in the church is not deception of itself, because we do have the standard of truth by which we can measure all things. We readily accept the challenge to prove all things by the written word of God, but we don't always have the spirit of discernment to confirm what we think we know. For that reason we have not come to an agreement as to which latter day revelations of the early church are true and which are false.

We have to admit that we do not all interpret the word of God the same. We dismay at our controversies which have us locked in unsolvable divisions of belief. Seldom are we able to convince our brothers who disagree with us that we are right in our understanding and they are wrong. In this we occasionally catch a glimpse of our human pride in our own ability to reason the truth in things we especially favor.

It is quite evident in our own personal works that no one of us is absolutely right in all things, but through the grace of God and our personal faith in Him, I'm convinced that no one of us is wrong in all things. God has given us weaknesses that we might be humble, but He also has graced us each with personal convictions which are basically true. Can I say ought against you for not believing exactly like I believe? No. I would not want to disturb your personal convictions just to make you agree with me. I would rather confirm and build up your convictions. If in the process I can bring light, then so be it. If through my over-zealousness I should place a stumbling block in your way, then I would defeat my good intentions. I pray God to prevent me from doing so.

WE MUST ADMIT WE NEED GOD'S HELP

If we agree that we are all less than perfect in our understandings and we need help

beyond what we can do ourselves to bring greater unity in the body, then perhaps we are at a point where the Lord can di-


Sometimes our biggest problem is trying to prompt God to speak to us what we want to hear.

rectly communicate His counsel and instructions. Let us remember that we are not to instruct the Instructor how to instruct. It is natural for man to want to be in control at all times.

Sometimes our biggest problem is trying to prompt God to speak to us what we want to hear. Indeed, we should want the Lord to speak to us, but we must learn to overcome our own will to control and let God be God. He knows what He wants to say, when He wants to say it and how He wants to say it. Our principle duty is to be receptive to what He says and believe what He says. We are to be as little children. We are to humble ourselves in the depths of humility. And we must develop a true desire to hear God speak, even a hunger and thirst for His word. We must want to hear Him speak because we are confident He is ultimately right, even if we don't immediately realize it when He

counters our mind set.

It is my feeling that the contrast between God and man is far greater than we are inclined to believe. I don't want to cause anyone to falter in their fear of God but the brazen attitude toward God in the world today is reason enough for us to continually examine ourselves lest we inadvertently partake of that spirit. We are plainly told that God's ways are not our ways. How then shall we know His ways that we might more fully obey Him? We are to know Him through His Spirit and His spoken and recorded word. This message is the burden of all scriptures.



BOOK OF MORMON HEROES

God Helps Nephi Build a Ship

REFERENCES: 1 Nephi 5:55-102, 154-178

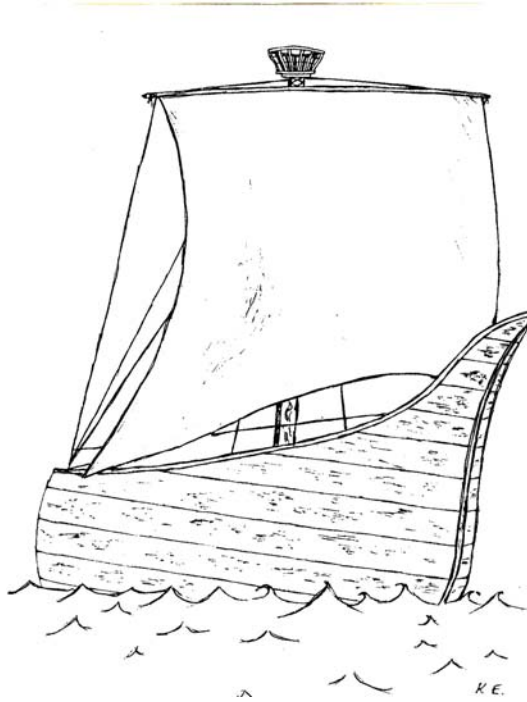
INTRODUCTION: In our last lesson God gave Lehi a special dream. He showed Lehi His wonderful love. In the dream Lehi's wife Sariah and his faithful sons Nephi and Sam came to God, but his oldest sons Laman and Lemuel walked away. Let's find out what happened.

After eight long years of traveling, the little band of people reached the ocean. It was a beautiful sight to the tired travelers! The group was bigger now. Ishmael's daughters had married Lehi's son. Babies had been born in the wilderness. What a hard journey it had been! "Don't build fires," God had warned them. "People must not know where you are." They ate meat that was not cooked, but God made it taste delicious! The meat made them strong and healthy.

The weary group set up their tents by the sea. They didn't have to look far for food. All along the shore were trees filled with delicious fruit and wild honey! Everyone was so happy to stop and rest from the long walk. They looked out at the great ocean. How big it was! What was on the other side? How would they get across this huge ocean to the Promised Land? Then God spoke.

"Nephi, go onto the mountain to pray." Then God began telling Nephi how to cut and put together each board to make the perfect ship. He even told Nephi where to find rocks with metal ore in them; metal ore that could be melted out and made into tools. "It is safe to make fire now," God said. What a wonderful sight the warm fire must have been as the rocks glowed inside it. Metal came melting out of the rocks, then hardened. What good strong tools it would make.

Nephi's brother Sam worked at his side. Soon the tools were finished. It was time to begin work on the



ship. While Nephi and Sam had been working Laman and Lemuel had had plenty of time to rest. Their stomachs were full from all the delicious fruit and honey. Perhaps they would be ready to help Nephi and Sam build the ship. No, not Laman and Lemuel!

"You're a fool Nephi! You don't know how to build a ship! You'll never make it across these great waters!" they complained. Nephi was sad because his brothers did not trust God. When Laman and Lemuel saw how sad Nephi was they got even angrier. "We were right! You're sad because you can't build a ship! We never should have left Jerusalem! We could still be enjoying our riches!" Then Nephi spoke strongly to his brothers. "Don't

you remember all that God has done for us?" Laman and Lemuel were so angry they charged toward Nephi. "Let's throw him in the ocean and let him drown! He can't tell us what to do anymore!" God had other plans for Nephi. He gave Nephi special power. Nephi stretched out his hand and Laman and Lemuel were shocked to the ground! "We're sorry, Nephi, we're sorry! Please forgive us; we know God is with you," Laman and Lemuel cried. "I forgive you," Nephi said. "Now let's get to work and build a ship."

As the ocean waves gently lapped against the beach, other sounds were heard each day. The sounds of axes splitting lumber and nails being pounded into wood. At last the ship was finished! The travelers loaded the ship with everything they would need to cross the ocean. God had saved them from the people in Jerusalem who wanted to kill them. He led them through the wilderness. He even taught them how to build a ship. At last they were on their way to the Promised Land!

You may not have to cross an ocean like Lehi and his family, but whatever you must do in your life, if you ask God He will show you the way.

GENERAL SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

BOOK OF MORMON HEROES

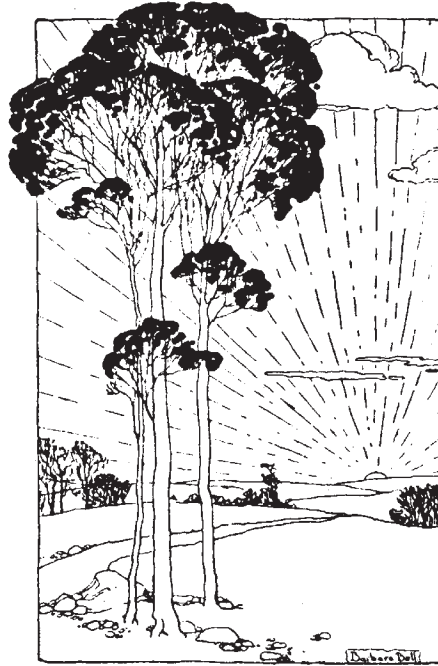
PATHLIGHTS

Testimony by Betsy Trudgen

In Dennis' job we are to move every few years, sometimes every two years, sometimes three. We had left England after two, thinking we would change job location. Dennis had lined up interviews. All the while we were praying for God's will. We wanted to be near Church, as we were scattered members. After all of Dennis' interviews, they told Dennis he didn't get the job. They said he was either overqualified or overpaid, and they didn't think they could afford him, even though he told them he was willing to work for less, that in that State living expenses were cheaper than in Washington DC. Nothing was working. I remember Dennis' frustration as time was running short and I was packing for us to move with our current job to Washington. We were praying for God's will and we just didn't understand why, why we weren't able to move near Church. Why wasn't it God's will for us to live near where we could attend Church? It just didn't seem reasonable. But we did pray for God's will and that if the job interviews didn't go well we would stay with the current job till retirement.

Now it is twenty years later, we have been scattered members for twenty-two years. I have endured talk and judgement of others, of why we didn't live closer to church. Others saying it was our choice that we lived away. That we were choosing worldly things over God. That we would be in danger being scattered for so long. That we all needed to live near Zion. These were all things we were worried about too. We couldn't see the wisdom at the time.

I will tell you we have had countless blessings since, some of which many have read about in the CCEG. Some blessings I am sure we are yet to see. Looking back over the years, WOW, I can see in each and every move why we were there. Some of the moves were just because we were in training for the here and now. Guatemala and Mexico was clearly training ground for missionary work. Before that, Virginia, USA, was training ground for Guatemala, Mexico, and Yucatan and Honduras trips. If we, as members, all live in one



PATHLIGHTS

area, how can the gospel go out to the world? Imagine the costs.

While in Mexico, we prayed for God's will before our next move. We wanted to move to a country so we could continue going to Yucatan and Honduras on Missionary trips. We thought for sure we were going to Venezuela and were shocked that we didn't get it. Not only that, that we were moving halfway around the globe to a country that didn't use Spanish, a language I thought I would be using a lot in missionary work. I would now have to start over and learn German. Amanda and I cried. We would be leaving our Spanish Church family. We were moving even farther away from Church than ever. We thought there must be some mistake and prayed about it.

During our last trip to Honduras a sister that I hadn't seen in a long while, said to me she had a dream. She said I was in an airplane going far far away and that she cried that I was leaving but knew I must go. I cried when she told me, for I knew that this was His will.

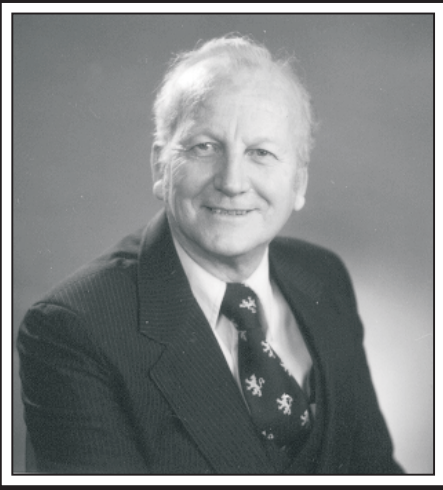
During our home leave (a vacation the Government gives you before a major move like this), Dennis was called to the office of an elder just two weeks before the move; our dog died one week before the move (on the day Dennis preached for the first time); and our car died only two days before shipping it out, leaving us no way to purchase another one before we left. The stress was high. When we got here it took us another eight months to have a car delivered. We have spent those eight months learning the public very well. God was cleaning up the things that would prevent us from going when he called us to do a job. Me finding a dog sitter and the stress of the old car breaking down.

Here we are now in Vienna, the center of nine neighboring nations, all within a few driving hours by public transportation. My neighbor is from Spain and we speak Spanish, the language I thought I wouldn't even use here. I also talk to a couple of maids from El Salvador. Amanda has a good friend from Mexico and they speak Spanish daily. Also I have written to a man in Spain that Don and Jay have been writing to about the Church.

I guess the lesson I have learned is that if it is God's will, it will turn out to be great. That I just need to hang on, be ready for him to use me and watch. We needed to learn to let go of our wants. Looking back I can say my desires were and are always to serve Him. I wanted to experience the miracles that Don McIndoo was in Yucatan, Ronnie Gill in Honduras and I am sure like many of you; my heart went out when Brian and Buzz went to Africa. I wanted to be a part of that. Well, maybe we will, just in a different location.

*May God Bless you,
Your sister in Christ,
Betsy*

Pondering the Words of JESUS CHRIST



By Apostle William A. Sheldon

Item 13: Killing, Anger, Spiteful Language - God's Judgment

Mat 5:21, 22 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

3 Ne 5:69, 70 Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, and it is also written before you, that thou shalt not kill; and whosoever

(Quotations are from the King James Authorized Edition of the Bible and from the 1908 RLDS Edition of the Book of Mormon; same chapters/verses as Independence Edition.)

shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of his judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire....

When the Lord commanded Israel of old not to kill, He referred to the killing of men, for they did kill animals for sacrifice unto Him. He meant, of course, a deliberate killing, or murder; they were not to take the life of another by their own choice. This is important to understand because of the later divine commandment for them to slay all the inhabitants of the cities God had given to Israel (see Deut. 20: 16-18); this because those nations would turn Israel to the worship of their idols. So, also, in God's command to Nephi to slay Laban in order to obtain the sacred records in his possession, for -

1 Ne. 1: 114-115 Behold the

Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish, than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief.

Please note that all of this is by the command of God, and not by volition of man, therefore it is not a free choice by which one might kill (murder) another. In the comparative texts concerning a man being angry with his brother, it is noteworthy that the Book of Mormon text deletes the phrase "without a cause." We are not to retain our anger lest we be made accountable for a righteous judgement; rather, we must exhibit meekness, kindness, mercy and forbearance; and also, we just might have been wrong in the situation.

Eph. 4: 26 - 27 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.

Jesus tried to impress His listeners with the importance of not using hurtful language in

conversation with others, or to swear by oath, or otherwise use vile language; and so when He said they should not say to a brother, "Raca" (meaning, "I spit upon you"; using derogatory language); they would be in danger of their Jewish Council's judgement (the Sanhedrin; or, in our time, a Church appointed Elder's judgement); but if they should call their brother a fool (effeminate, brutish, renegade) or curse him, they would be in danger of hell fire, or the judgement of God. It is probably best encouched in His further admonition:

Matt. 5: 33-37 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

He is saying here: Speak truly, soberly, not in foolishness. Inasmuch as possible, say what you mean and mean what you say. Innocent humor is acceptable and may allay a mounting spirit of tension or antagonism, but bantering (human ridicule), even in a humorous sense, is less than profitable and can be

hurtful in the extreme. It should be avoided.

Of the importance of speaking truly and righteously, Jesus spoke even more forcefully:

Mat 12:34 - 37 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Item 14: Reconciliation with a Brother before Approach to God

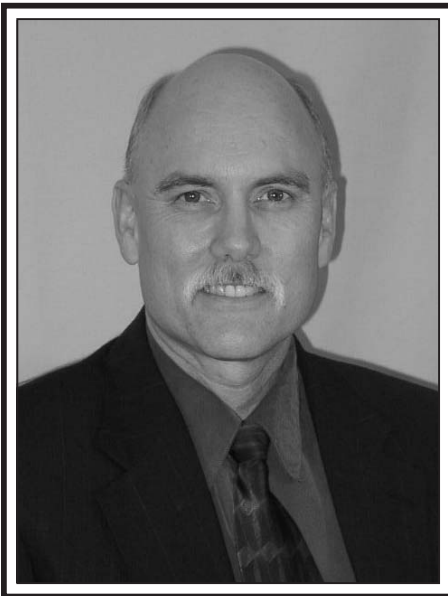
Mat 5:23, 24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

3 Ne 5:71, 72 Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you.

In application to those under the gospel covenant, this is a solemn requirement to one before he receives the Sacrament

(the Lord's Supper), to firstly go to any offended brother or sister, of whom he is aware, and to make amends, if possible. Otherwise, his gift is not that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and will be unacceptable to God, but rather to his condemnation. If the offended party will not receive a genuine token of contrition, then the one offended is guilty, and the other is free.

Articles of Faith & Practice



(A continuation study by
Elder Gordon McCann)

Article #12

After Jesus fasted for forty days and nights He started His ministry by choosing twelve men out of the world and ordaining them as His twelve disciples (Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19). Jesus gave them power against unclean spirits

with the ability to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and diseases. The disciples were then sent out among the “lost sheep” of the house of Israel to preach unto them that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

These men and many others (Luke 10:1 “seventy”) were chosen of God, being called out of the world among men to serve their God by teaching and preaching the Word of God to those they came in contact with. Jesus sent them out “two and two” into every city and place where Jesus would soon travel to as a way to prepare the people for His coming.

Another example of men being called would be found in Acts 13:1-3. Here we find Barnabas and Saul’s names were brought forth through men who had been fasting and praying for more laborers

Article #12

We believe that a man must be called of God by revelation, and ordained by those having authority, to enable him to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances thereof.

to work in God’s harvest (Matthew 9:37-38). The Holy Ghost rested upon the men gathered, and God made known by direct revelation His perfect will concerning Barnabas and Saul. Afterwards, hands were laid upon their heads (ordained by those having authority) and they were then sent forth to

preach and teach the children of men about the Kingdom of God.

There are many other good examples in the Book of Mormon where men were called of God and ordained by those having authority to do so by God (2 Ne 5:2-3; Jacob 1:18; Mosiah 9:51; Alma 9:72; 3 Nephi 5:21-22; Moroni 2:1-3, 3:1-3).

When Apostle Paul was addressing the brethren in Rome he made a simple statement about God's plan for the children of men and how they would get an opportunity for salvation through hearing the Gospel of Christ preached.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Rom 10:13-15.

During his exhortation to the Jewish Christians, the Apostle Paul spoke a warning voice to those who would falsely claim that they had been called of God but in reality that was not the case.

"And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" Hebrews 5:4.

A man could only claim the honor of being called of God by the same way Aaron of old was set aside by the voice of God through his servant Moses.

"And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons" Exodus 28:1.

Jesus, as He was with His disciples preparing them for the events that were to soon take place, said these words to them to remind them how they came to be disciples.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should

go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16).

HOUSTON, MISSOURI, LOCAL REPORT

August 31, 2003

We at the Houston local were blessed to have Bro. Bill Malone with us today. We were sorry Sister Karen could not be with us today too.

We were shown how the Americas are a choice land above all other lands, and all who are led here are to serve the only true God. If the people who possess the land are obedient to Christ they will be blessed, but if sin sets in and the inhabitants become ripe in iniquity, then they will be swept off. God has sworn in His wrath to wipe out those who will not serve Him.

When we look at the evil taking place in our world today, one wonders how much sin and evil God will allow before keeping His promise. Gay marriages being legalized in Canada, marijuana being legalized for use as medicine therapy, the TV programs—all are examples of our ripening in iniquity.

Bill stated he sees two types of people: those who are part of the problem, and those who are part of the solution. Choose to let your light shine forth unto the world and be part of the solution.

Bill brought up the parable of the ten virgins, five who had oil in their lamps and five who had none. He says all were baptized members of Christ's church. He says that at baptism all were given lamps with

oil. He also said we should not hide our lamps in the closet so that the oil will dissipate, but that we should let our light shine forth, and by our obedience to God and following Christ's example we will be adding oil to our lamps.

The oil is our works of righteousness, the things we do from following Christ's example. We need to witness to others about our hope and belief in Christ, visit the sick and those confined at home, doing things for others. We need to follow through on all the opportunities to serve God that come our way.

How many times have opportunities come our way and we did not recognize them or felt unequal to the task? We need to pray that God will help us to recognize the opportunities He sends us. If we feel overwhelmed at the task sent us, feel reluctant and unable to do the task, or if we have a sin or problem in our lives, we should not ask God to take the problem away but pray He will help us to go through it, to help accomplish what needs to be done. All problems we face need to be dealt with. He does not want us to face them alone, but want us to seek His help and He will go through them with us. Trials work patience. Ask God to help us through all our problems.

We need to concentrate on oth-

ers and not ourselves. Let your light shine. Let others see your hope in Christ. Make God the most important part of your life. No amount of prayer will be too burdensome for God.

We are to be concerned for others, help them, forgive their trespasses. As you forgive others, God will forgive you.

Being active for God, we will have more oil for our lamps.

*Submitted by Sylvia Addie,
Houston Local Reporter*

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Specify program(s) wanted, anticipated dates of use, and the make of your projector. Slide projectors and tape players are not provided except in the Independence, Missouri, or Phoenix, Arizona, areas.

Allow adequate advance time for handling and shipping, and for your own preview of the programs. Write to the AVVAA Committee, Church of Christ, P.O. Box 472, Independence, Missouri 64051-0472.

LAMP UNTO MY FEET, A (32 minutes)—Directed specifically toward American Indian viewers, compiled from three other programs.

LIGHT AT EVENING (27 minutes)—Story of the bringing forth of the book of Mormon and the restoration of the Church of Christ in the 1820's and 1830.

OUT OF THE DUST (45 minutes)—Tells the story found within the Book of Mormon.

RETURN, THE (12 minutes)—Reveals the significance of the return to the "land of Zion" in 1867 by the members of the Church of Christ, especially as holders of Title to the previously dedicated Temple Lot.

HOLY SCRIPTURES ON AUDIO CASSETTE TAPE

Complete set narrating the King James Version of the Bible New Testament and a set of the entire Book of Mormon. Write to Dan Lawrence, 8420 Lee's Summit Road, Kansas City, Missouri 64139. Specify which set is desired and the estimated length of time you expect to use it.

SERMONS ON AUDIO & VIDEO CASSETTE TAPES

For a sermon on cassette tape write to Dan Lawrence, 8420 Lee's Summit Road, Kansas City, Missouri 64139; on video tape contact your local missionary.

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS

Send orders for Sunday School materials to Debbie Vogel, 403 West Colonel Drive, Independence, Missouri 64050. All materials are free of charge to members of the Church of Christ, except as noted. Donations will be accepted to cover postage.

Bible Stories to Grow By—52 Lessons about God and Jesus for ages 5-7

Book in the Stone Box, The—About the Book of Mormon

Church History for Juniors—Includes a Teacher's Guide

Jesus' Life and Teachings—4 Quarterlies for ages 8-10

Who Am I?—Bible game on cards; free to Sunday Schools/\$1.30 to individuals.