

Magazine New Wine

October 1981

I. THOU SHALT HAVE NO
OTHER GODS ~~BEFORE ME.~~
besides thyself.

II. ~~THOU SHALT NOT MAKE~~
~~THEE ANY GRAVEN~~
~~IMAGE.~~ *Obsolete*

III. ~~THOU SHALT NOT TAKE~~
~~THE NAME OF THE LORD~~
~~THY GOD IN VAIN.~~ *Express
thyself.*

IV. REMEMBER, THE
SABBATH DAY [^] *is like any*
~~TO KEEP IT HOLY.~~ *other day.*

Reject
V. ~~HONOR~~ [^] *thy father and*
thy mother, and their old-
fashioned ideas.

VI. THOU SHALT NOT KILL, *except*
unwanted, unborn children.

VII. THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT
~~ADULTERY.~~ *deny thyself.*

VIII. THOU SHALT NOT STEAL, *except*
on thy income tax return.

IX. ~~THOU SHALT NOT BEAR~~
~~FALSE WITNESS AGAINST~~
~~THY NEIGHBOR.~~ *Truth*
is relative.

X. THOU SHALT NOT COVET. —
buy it on credit.

(Mankind's Revised Version)

Modern Morality Tampering with God's law

EDITORIAL



The recent prominence of groups advocating a renewal of biblical morality in our nation has prompted a flood of reaction and not a little criticism from the press, politicians and the public. The negative remarks have ranged in intensity from mildly sarcastic to wildly vitriolic, but one thread seems to run throughout the criticism: all of it stereotypes Christian moralists as dour-faced, joyless puritans whose sole intent is to restrict personal freedom, enforce conformity to legalistic standards, and make laughter, mirth and enjoyment punishable crimes.

Unfortunately, in some cases the stereotype is deadly accurate, much to the discredit of the greater part of Christendom.

However, in the majority of cases, it is an ugly and fraudulent caricature, one which carries a message as old as Satan himself. The message is this: "*Morality brings misery.*" It's the same basic idea that the serpent used to beguile Adam and Eve into eating the forbidden fruit: "God just wants to deprive you of happiness."

This presumptuous humanistic assertion that "morality brings misery" is a gigantic lie. Morality doesn't bring misery—*immorality* (or amorality) does. Even a cursory glance at history and sociological statistics confirms that immorality in marriage and the family brings wreckage and trauma to this pillar of all social structure; immorality in business wreaks economic and ethical havoc; and immorality in government brings disrepute and ultimate downfall to men and nations. The debris of broken human lives strewn across the face of the earth is not the ruins of morality run amuck, but rather the wreckage left by repeated whirlwinds of immorality and anarchy. Morality has not spawned this present misery—the *lack of it* has.

But immorality is not only *destructive*—it is also *unproductive*. In simple terms, it just doesn't work. Man's futile effort to live successfully while disregarding God's immutable laws reminds me of an incident involving my sons. As typical young boys, they are rarely content just to ride their bikes down our sloping driveway. They insist on constructing a bike ramp to make the ride *exciting*. (It doesn't matter to them that the bike ramp may only generate a two-inch jump—just as long as the bike leaves the ground momentarily.)

As I recall, one of their early attempts to erect a ramp failed miserably. They took a flimsy cardboard box and shaped it to form an incline. When I pointed out to them that it wouldn't be strong enough to hold the weight of a boy on a bike, they pro-

tested: "It'll hold us Dad—we know it will." Rather than give an involved explanation about the principles of physics, I decided to let them see for themselves.

When the front wheel of the first bike hit the cardboard ramp, there was a "whump" as the ramp flattened to the pavement under the weight of the bike. Together, the boys gingerly lifted the mangled cardboard to dispose of it, treating it almost like an injured pet—shocked at how wrong they had been. They had learned what for them was a painful lesson: no matter how much we believe otherwise, we just can't disregard certain basic laws of nature—like cardboard being no match for bike tires—and expect things to work.

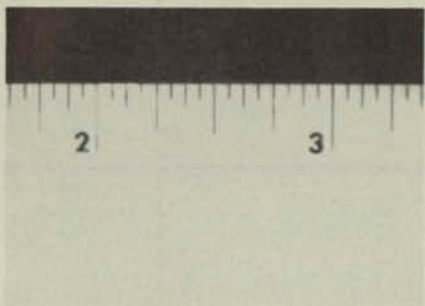
In the same way, we are mistaken if we believe we can ignore God's immutable laws with impunity and success. Unfortunately, we may suffer years, even generations, of pain and futility before realizing that unbiblical experimentations ultimately prove destructive and unworkable.

What is the alternative? I think it's best expressed by a simple comment I recently heard a wise pastor make: "It's *better* to live the Kingdom way." It is better to live by God's proven directives than to experiment with unproven humanistic theories. Any person who has read and attempted to live by Psalm 119—which outlines the nature of God's law and the benefits of walking in obedience to it—can confirm the truth of that statement. My hope is that each of us would have the good sense to pray as the psalmist did in Psalm 119:29: "Remove the false way from me, and graciously grant me *Thy law*."

Dick Leggatt

Dick Leggatt
Managing Editor

OCTOBER 1981



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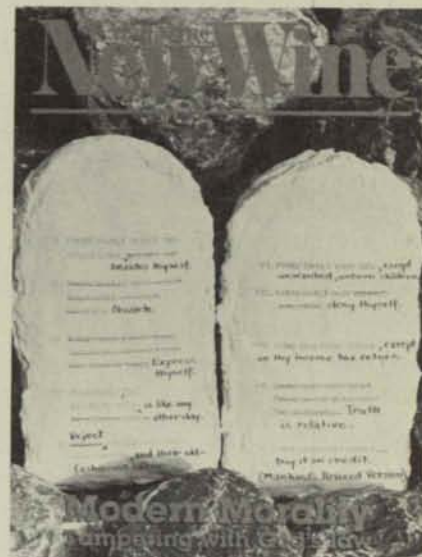
We need not strive with situation ethics or drown in a sea of subjective unreality.

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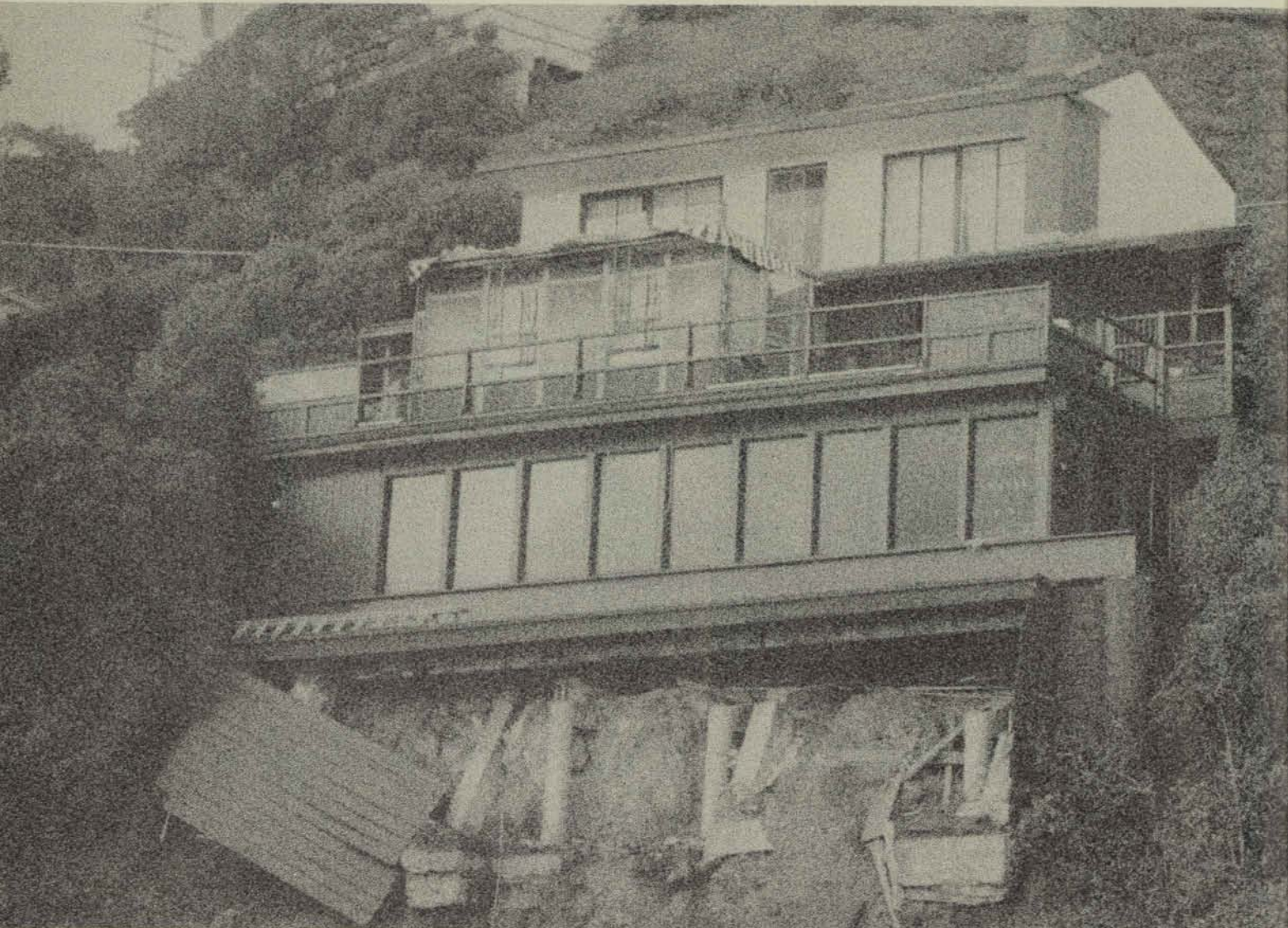
“Holiness ought to be the
end of all civil
government. . . . ‘that
thou mayest be a holy
people unto the Lord thy
God.’”

Ezra Stiles, D.D., President, Yale College, in a speech before
the General Assembly, State of Connecticut, May 8, 1783.

Recently I was struck
by the realization of
how young our nation
is. It amazes me to
consider that I, in my early forties, am one fifth as old as America! In the brief span of two hundred years, we have come from modest beginnings characterized by rugged pioneers and fearless statesmen to

the most technically advanced and prosperous society in all history. A family of moderate means today lives with greater mobility and with more conveniences than the wealthiest monarchs of earlier ages.

I have made an effort to know something of our heritage as a nation, and yet I realize how little I know of the truth of



House Upon the Sand

by John Beckett

those earlier days. I am constantly turning up evidence of our Christian foundations as a nation that eludes and would probably startle most of our populace today. Our society has failed tragically in transmitting its godly heritage. As a result, decisions are being made in both the private sector and in various spheres of government—in particular the legislative and judicial—which are based on a totally different frame of reference from the one our nation had at the time of its founding.

Other peoples in other ages have often been much more effective in transmitting their history. The Jews are a prime example. In spite of a dispersion that lasted nearly two thousand years and the virtual extinction of their national language during that time, they have retained an identity with their past that has miraculously produced nationhood in our generation. Their heritage survived through their obedience to the admonition in Deuteronomy 6:6-7:

And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

We need to take a look at some of the ways in which America has departed radically from the concepts that produced our great leap into freedom and provided the framework from which has come the unparalleled progress we noted earlier. For this brief analysis, I will draw extensively from an excellent educational handbook by the great historian and patriot, Rus Walton, entitled *Fundamentals for American Christians*, recently published by Plymouth Rock Foundation.

The Source of Authority

In the early days of America,

her people realized that their source was God. They depended upon the Lord as He is revealed in Isaiah 33:22:

For the Lord is our judge,
The Lord is our lawgiver,
The Lord is our king;
He will save us.

This attitude was expressed by John Quincy Adams when, as Secretary of State, he said, "From the day of the Declaration [of Independence]... they [the American people] were bound by the laws of God, which they all, and by the laws of the Gospel, which they nearly all, acknowledged as the rules of their conduct."

Today we find that a very different basis has developed for our "rules of conduct." The rules are determined as we go, by our perception of what is fair, what is just. The source of authority has become humanism, a god made of human flesh, as we have exalted *self*. In the collective sense, we look to the "voice of the people," a democratic majority, as our sovereign authority. Very few of our legislators today act according to principle when they perceive that principle might differ from the prevailing view of their constituents. We are victims of the neglect described in Judges 2:10: "And there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done...." We are looking to a different source of authority.

The Nature and Quality of Civil Government

A question Paul asked the Galatians identifies the primary motive that shaped men's actions in our early history: "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please man? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10 NAS). William Blackstone, in his *Commentaries* of 1765, clearly identifies with Paul's theme to the Galatians.

As man depends absolutely upon his Maker for everything, it is necessary that he should in all points conform to his Maker's will.... Those are the eternal, immutable laws of good and evil, to which the Creator Himself in all His Dispensations conforms; and which He has enabled human reason to discover, so far as necessary for the conduct of human actions.

Today, we rarely think of "immutable laws of good and evil." We are too "enlightened" for the rigid discipline of biblical standards, so we devise our own, and call them "relative" standards—suited to current social norms. The results of such non-standards have been disastrous. Consider today's young people. Many are sexually promiscuous without the slightest notion that it is wrong, or that they are violating God's standards for righteousness. Crime is committed without compunction, and agencies entrusted to enforce the law are laughed at as archaic institutions out of touch with reality.

Tragically, we have ignored the higher truth of God's Word: "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does" (Ja. 1:25 NAS). Many are missing true liberty (which is in Christ) and through the neglect of God's immutable laws are finding a kind of "freedom" that is really bondage.



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"TUITION TAX CREDITS? NO WAY—THAT WOULD DESTROY PUBLIC EDUCATION AS WE KNOW IT!"

Cartoon courtesy
of John Trever,
Albuquerque
Journal. Used
by permission.

Education

Radical changes in American education have occurred. Where education was originally the province of the home and the Church, control has progressively been assumed, even usurped, by the secular state. Institutes of higher learning have become the seedbeds of radical thought and action. I attended the graduation ceremonies at Harvard University this June. I looked on with dismay as homosexual groups openly pressed their claims for full recognition and listened with chagrin to endless addresses exalting human wisdom and human accomplish-

ment. How far we have departed from the educational philosophy prevalent in the days of Harvard's early mission is obvious from these words of the "Rules, and Precepts That Are Observed," issued at Harvard College in 1642:

Let every Student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life, (John 17:5) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom, as the only foundation of all found knowledge and learning."

The United States today, however, might better be described by the words prophetically written to Timothy:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Many parents have awakened to the heretical teaching of secular humanism in modern education and sought alternatives in the Christian school movement. The impact of this movement is drawing sharp reaction from government and educational elitists who want to control what our children learn. We can expect to see continuing efforts by the IRS and Department of Education to thwart Christian education, because they fail to understand the spiritual basis for learning. Yet Christian parents must vigilantly protect the right to rear and educate their children. In the education process we must be diligent to teach the Christian heritage of America, and preserve for future generations "the main end of our life and studies."

Justice

One hundred years before the Declaration of Independence, Samuel Willard described the concept of justice that was to frame human conduct during the early years of the nation:

Nor is this justice to be looked upon as separate from the fear of God, but as influenced and maintained by it. He therefore that "ruleth in the fear of God," is one who acknowledgeth God to be his Sovereign, and carries in his heart an awful fear of Him.... Furthermore, he [a good magistrate] must be one whome neither flattery nor bribery may be able to move out of His way, Deut. xvi, 19...."

In contrast, the words of Habakkuk more aptly describe today's justice in America:

Therefore, the law is ignored, and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore, justice comes out perverted (Hab. 1:4 NAS).

As standards of justice move



away from a biblical base, there is no acceptable substitute, and so we eventually measure ourselves by ourselves which, the Bible says, is not wise (2 Cor. 10:12). A few years ago it appeared that the so-called Equal Rights Amendment to the U. S. Constitution would fail to receive the required approval of two thirds of the state legislatures by the end of the seven-year period allotted. The response of a majority in the U. S. Congress was to extend the deadline by three years, tantamount to an umpire adding extra innings to a ball game because the team he favors is losing. That travesty of justice has probably done more to seal the doom of this ill-conceived amendment than any other single action—and yet the fact that it could happen shows how justice has been perverted.

Our courts are another clear example, and here the majority opinion of the nation is right on target. In a 1980 survey by the National Opinion Research Center, the question was asked, "In general, do you think the courts in this [geographical] area deal too harshly or not harshly enough with certain criminals?" Over eighty percent of those surveyed responded, "The courts are not harsh enough." In leaning over backwards to protect the criminal, we have severely compromised the rights and personal freedoms of the innocent. Justice has been perverted.

Justice undoubtedly reached its lowest level in our history in 1973 when the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in the *Roe vs. Wade* decision that the unborn child is a nonperson and should be denied protections that exist for children after birth. In the aftermath, over ten million innocent, helpless babies have been killed in their mothers' wombs. As this article is being written, the suitability of Sandra O'Connor for the U. S. Supreme Court is being considered by the U. S. Senate, and people want to know how the appointee feels about human life. Will she act to

protect it, or has she been "seduced" by the ungodly claims of the radical feminist movement—that "freedom of choice" (to kill an unborn child) supercedes the right of a child to live? It is right that we should ask, and it is right that we should require of our judges adherence to the Constitution they are sworn to uphold. That Constitution, based on God's higher law, respects *life* first, and *then* liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Reestablishing the Foundation

These are but a few of the areas in which we have departed from our historical understanding of truth based on God's Word. Further analysis could show parallel trends with regard to individual rights, local autonomy, rights to property, and religious freedom. In each case, biblical standards shaped the policy established by our nation's founders. Progressive substitution of man's wisdom for God's wisdom and man's standards for God's standards has caused the abandoning of the very foundation of our society. How long can a house remain standing once the foundation rock crumbles into sand?

When I consider the fact that the "house" still stands—in spite of the way our foundations have crumbled—I become nearly overwhelmed with God's goodness. He is certainly under no obligation to preserve us. His justice demands accountability, and we can not escape that fact. But we are seeing the outpouring of His grace. I believe it is for a very real purpose.

His purpose is to give an opportunity to the Church to rise up and reestablish the foundation. He is saying, "I will keep the building from collapsing while you dig down and repair the foundation." We must recognize that the Church—not secular leadership—has this responsibility. We are the representatives of God on earth with tremendous authority, and how we build will determine

how society builds.

I believe the presidential and congressional elections of 1980 were a clear affirmation of God's desire to heal our land. Many congressional contests were won by "dark horse" candidates who stood openly for respect for life, justice, and human dignity. Historians may look back on this election as the beginning of another great revival in America. I trust this will be primarily spiritual, but that it will also pervade society, and that America will rise in stature for the nations to see a people whose God is the Lord.

Signs of God's blessings have continued to pour out since the beginning of this year:

- The release of the hostages on Inauguration Day.
- The President spared miraculously from the assassin's bullet.
- Rain to imperiled, drought-stricken areas throughout the country.
- Oil surpluses, lessening our dependence on Islamic nations in the Mideast.
- Indications of fiscal responsibility in government spending.
- Successful efforts to restore the work ethic (two thirds of the 132,000 CETA workers who lost government-subsidized jobs this year have been employed in private enterprise).

God's blessings will continue—He truly *wants* to bless us—if we will honor the standards of God's Word in private and public life. The message is no different from the message given repeatedly to ancient Israel and best summed up by 2 Chronicles 7:14, the clarion call that we must heed for our survival: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." ▼

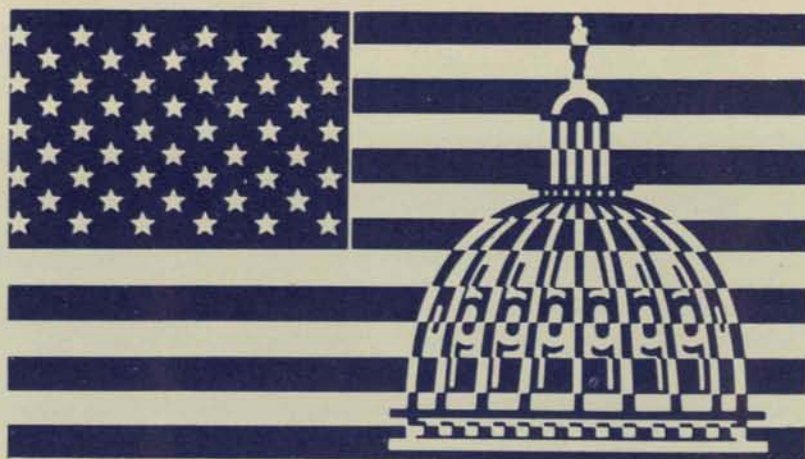
South Dakota has had a severe drought for the past two years. At the beginning of this year the picture was extremely bleak. Ranchers were forced to reduce their cattle herds even to the point of selling cows with calves for the slaughter.

The Lord began to speak to me about a prayer meeting in which we would fast and repent for the sins of our area and ask in faith for normal or above-normal rainfall. As I discussed this concern with the elders in our church, God said clearly that we were to make this a city-wide effort rather than an independent one.

With this priority in mind, I approached two fellow ministers to ask for their response to the idea. I had determined in my own heart to suspend plans for the meeting if they were not both in support of it. But before our discussion was over they were both as enthusiastic about the proposal as I was.

A special meeting was then called of the Evangelical Ministerial Association of Rapid City. As we presented the plan, God began to work in our midst and we could feel the level of faith start to rise immediately. We left this initial session with twenty solid commitments to support the effort. What was particularly gratifying to me was the warmth and acceptance shown me by the Association, even though I was a relative newcomer who was giving direction to the group. The conviction began to stir in my heart that God was intending to accomplish much more than simply sending rain.

I cannot recall ever before knowing such unity and cooperation with other ministers as I



Intercessors Report

by Gary Johnson

State drought issue gloomy

Bob Tucker
Capital Bureau

PIERRE — There office in town that happy not to exist. get together, the t always depressing. gests a subject So like to think about.

The governor's I fice, activated las the 1980 drought, first time this yea like old home we who sat around their gloomy rep happy to stay in tive government "Right now, w if we

Drought worsens in east

Tamara Jones
Associated Press Writer

Students in Hawaii are eating off plates to save dishwater and offici New York are thinking of digging a under Shea Stadium to keep the baseball park green as a parches farflung

Foreca to ano

PIERRE — Severe to ext conditions in western

State still suffers from lack of rain

Tena Haraldson
Associated Press Writer

Although recent rains soaked parts of the state still suffers supplies.

crop moisture index and have crops while being in the midst critical long-term drought," said NWS report.

But for the long haul, only the P and Winner areas had above rainfall. Huron's precipitation was of normal.

began to experience then. Each pastor had some special insight to contribute. One minister reminded us that we were "putting it all on the line," and that each of us needed to commit ourselves to the meeting as though he would be the only one there. Others said that we should openly declare before the whole community that God was going to send above-normal rainfall.

The Prayer Meeting

Living in a ranching community, we decided to hold the prayer meeting on Sunday evening at the county 4-H building, which seats approximately six hundred. We advertised in all of the local media, emphasizing that the first thing we had to do

was to repent for the sins of our area—especially abortion and pornography. Three ministers were chosen to give brief messages clarifying our objectives and further preparing the people.

Before this time we had received less than one inch of rain all year. During the final week of preparation we received a small amount of rain. Some became discouraged because God seemed to be getting ahead of us and interrupting our plans. However, the general consensus was that God was sending us an earnest of what was to come.

On the night of May 10, my family and I left for the meeting in order to arrive about thirty minutes early. Satan began to whisper in my ear, "There will only be a handful of people there." But as we came closer to the meeting place, my heart began to stir—although I still was not prepared for the sight that met us as we rounded the final corner. The parking lots were filled, and already cars were being parked on the grass. Inside, the room was filled to capacity and both local television stations were set up to cover the event.

The Holy Spirit was moving in a special way—we were overwhelmed with a sense of unity. The music was strengthening, and as we listened, any remaining doubts or tensions melted away. A prepared litany was read by one of the ministers and the rest of the people responded in unison. The microphone was then left open for others to pray. The meeting was concluded on a strong note of victory as we sang "Our God Reigns."

Immediate Results

That night the sky began to cloud up. Two days later the heavens opened and the refreshing rains came. For the next several weeks it rained three or four times every week. I will never forget flying into Rapid City several weeks later and looking down at all that green. Every waterhole and stock dam had water in it. My son greeted me at

the airport with jubilation: "Dad, we've had three inches of rain over the weekend!"

A local television station conducted a follow-up interview with one of our committee members. He was asked whether we really thought prayer was responsible for the rain; couldn't it be mere coincidence? The essence of his reply was simple: "Why do people find it so difficult to give God credit for anything?" The interviewer also asked whether we had any contingency plans should the prayer meeting fail to produce the above-normal rainfall we sought. The pastor simply stated that we felt God heard us the first time, and no more meetings were necessary.

A season of adequate rain will be necessary to restore the water table to its normal level. But in the few months since the prayer meeting, we have already received well over sixteen inches—more than a normal year's rainfall. The drought has been broken and the area has never looked greener. In addition, an extensive infestation of grasshoppers that had been predicted as a result of the drought was averted by a downpour that came at precisely the right time to destroy the pests. But the most significant result of our prayers is in the Christian community itself. Unity among the churches in Rapid City, like the rainfall, is running well "above normal" and continuing to increase. For that special "shower of blessing," we are all grateful. ♥

Remember: Friday, October 2, is a national day of prayer and fasting.

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Experts reports

ing possible conditions like the 1930s," said Keith Harner, of the State Department of Conservation.

Experts point to her drought

only area involved in that pr was to represent the state meeting. Hilding speculated the department has no mon other modification, i appropriate

Most of state remains parched

PIERRE (AP) — Despite recent rains, most of South Dakota remains plagued by drought, a state official says. Nearly all of the state had less than percent of normal rainfall in the four-week period from April 5 to May 3, Hilding of the Water and Natural Resources Department told a meeting Governor's Drought Analysis ttee. Portions of the state not in the drought

A book I have enjoyed was written almost fifty years ago, and won the Pulitzer Prize. The title of the book is *Within This Present*. In her introduction, the author, Margaret Ayer Barnes, tells about talking with a number of her friends concerning the previous twenty-year

period. They all agreed that much of what had taken place during those years was both foolish and tragic. Her novel was an effort to put that foolish and tragic era into perspective.

The story begins in a large and elegant home of a Chicago suburb. The family had gathered to celebrate the grandmother's seventieth birthday. After dessert

had been served, the birthday guest of honor surprised everyone by rising to her feet and announcing that she was going to give a speech, a long speech. "I thank God," she said, "that I can still feel young and uncertain and perplexed, yet undaunted, just as I did at sixteen. Of course I see a great many things in life that perplex me. And what perplexes me

People



most is that I can't understand how they came to be there—in my life, in our lives, I mean. You see, we've changed. The family has... We're not at all like what we started from. I've seen it happening for fifty years, and still I don't understand it. We've gained some things, but we've lost others. On the whole, I think we've lost a good deal more than we've

we live on and the universe that surrounds us, and we have made unimaginable progress in our tools and our conveyances so that we can accomplish far more swiftly and accurately and abundantly the projects we choose to undertake. Most diseases and malfunctions of human organs can now be controlled or repaired. The medical advances

velous advances? What about the present generation of Americans who can eat better, ride faster and further, live longer, study more intensively, and enjoy more leisure than their parents? Are they wiser, more serene, more lawful, more civic-minded, or a greater credit to their nation and to their Maker? We must do a lot of head-scratching to develop much of a list of major advances in the fields of human behavior in recent years. Certainly our nation has made significant progress in opening doors that had wrongfully been closed to minority groups. Each of us could probably add a few other praiseworthy changes if we thought long enough, but the big triumphs in human behavior are not numerous or obvious.

Indeed, it is here that the list of our losses is quite impressive. The evidence of troubled lives is all about us. Emotional disorders, dependence upon alcohol and other damaging drugs, runaway children, runaway parents, participation in odd religious cults and in bizarre and futile programs to pump up the ego—all these evidences of human confusion and uncertainty bedevil the rich and poor alike to a degree that would have astonished earlier generations. The percentage of our citizens who are at peace *with themselves* is unquestionably smaller than it was, and is still decreasing.

Our record of dealing with each other is, if anything, even worse than our capacity to live with ourselves. The dishonesty of politicians and businessmen is trumpeted daily in the press, but there is ample evidence that dishonesty is spread equally among



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of Principle: An Endangered Species

by John Howard

gained... We've lost the things I should have thought most likely to endure."

Gains and Losses

That book was written almost half a century ago, but I think it has something to say directly to us today. In the years since 1933 we, too, have gained some things and lost others, and they are essentially the same things Mrs. Barnes saw so clearly in her day. Furthermore, I believe many thoughtful people would agree that we have lost more than we have gained.

Let us consider some of the things in both columns and start with the gains, because they are more obvious and rather easy to understand. For the most part, they are scientific and technical. We have learned more and more about the workings of the human body and about the earth

are astounding. The work week has been shortened. In the United States you can buy foods at the corner market from remote regions of the world—like kiwi fruit—that our parents had never even heard of. Researchers keep finding newer and better ways of controlling bugs and pests that used to devastate our crops. We have built far more schools and colleges than we have students to put into them, and we have audio and visual and mechanical teaching equipment that was inconceivable for the teachers of the past. We have comforts and household aids and entertainment opportunities now available to people of small income which could not have been purchased by the richest monarchs of a few decades ago.

Well, how about the performance of the people who are the beneficiaries of all these mar-

Tips For Fathers

This month make an individual date with each of your children (just Dad and one child). Dress up and go to his favorite eating place for his favorite dish (if your budget allows). Keep the discussion on his level and listen carefully to him. Learn to hear what he feels deep down inside. The purpose of these individual "dates" is to get to know each child as an individual the way the Heavenly Father knows us.

P.S. The same idea works extremely well with your wife.

Tips for Fathers are excerpts from **Fathergram**. If you would like to be added to their mailing list, write: **Fathergram**, P.O. Box Z, Mobile, AL 36616.

all careers—doctors, lawyers, college presidents, social workers and Pulitzer Prize winners, as well as legislators and bureaucrats.

An Encounter With Crime

Last year, serious crime increased by thirteen percent in our country, continuing an upward spiral that has prevailed for many years. Recently it was predicted that one in every three families will be the victim of crime this year. I don't know about you, but I have already had my crime experience for 1981, so two of you families out there are off the hook for the next three months, and can resume your worrying next January first.

I want to relate to you my encounter with crime because it sets the scene for what might be done to retrieve some of the precious things we have lost. I had flown to Phoenix to give a speech at a conference out there. I was on a rather tight schedule, so I took a

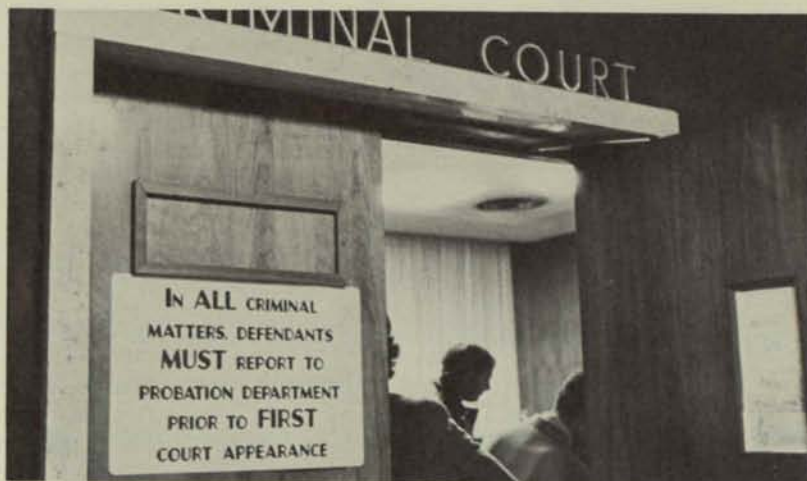
taxi instead of waiting for the limousine. I asked the driver how much it would cost to take me to Mountain Shadows Resort. "Oh," he said, "there's a flat fee of twenty-five dollars for all those fancy resorts in Scottsdale." I said, "My, inflation has really hit the cab business! That's a whole lot more than it was last time I was here." "Well," he said, "that's the charge."

So he took me there and I

money than he needed—so it seemed reasonable to overcharge me.

The Awesome Importance of Rules

As I think about that remark, I believe it offers a clue to a great many of the serious losses that we have sustained. That driver had simply rejected the civilized rules of conduct, and decided for himself what was



paid him the twenty-five dollars. As soon as I got to my room, I phoned the cab company and asked how much it would cost to take a cab from the airport to Mountain Shadows. "Anywhere from eleven to thirteen dollars, depending on traffic conditions," the lady said. "Then," I said, "I wish to register a formal complaint," so she put me through to the manager. He was appalled at what I told him, since there are no flat fees charged for such a trip. He said the company would certainly pay me back, and he would call me again later. When the phone rang, he told me he was sending my driver over to straighten this thing out. Fifteen minutes later the young man called me from the hotel lobby.

When I got there, he was standing uneasily on one foot and then the other, with the money in his hand. I asked him why he had done this. He replied that he was short of money, and obviously anyone who could afford to stay at Mountain Shadows has more

"reasonable" according to his own circumstances. That is how savages behave. If a savage wants something he doesn't have, he simply takes it away from someone who is weaker or dumber than he is. In this case, he gambled that I was too dumb to know I was being ripped off.

Civilization doesn't work that way. There must be rules that the people accept in order for them to live and work together in reasonable harmony. And this is true for any group activity. In a baseball game, if the pitcher tackles the runner on the way to first base in order to give the fielders more time to throw the man out, and if the best hitter goes to bat any time he wants to, and if the biggest team insists on having twenty-two outs before the inning is over, this is not a baseball game. It is certifiable chaos.

In a place of business, if the workers arrive and leave whenever they choose, and feel free to pour Coca Cola on the com-

puter, and take home the office typewriters, that company isn't going to last long. The same thing is true of a family or a church or a school or a nation. If each person decides which rules he will obey, that particular group disintegrates. And when an individual starts breaking the rules, it tears apart the network of trust required for any joint effort in which he is involved.

If you know that the person working next to you steals and lies, your own effectiveness is diminished; you have to be constantly on the alert so that you aren't caught up in his dishonesty. You don't make a very good team. It is only when people



trust each other that life can be pleasant for them and that they can perform well in any joint activity.

Let's go right to the heart of this thing. In our country, we have lost sight of *the awesome importance of rules*. And it isn't just the breaking of formal public laws, which we label crime, that is tearing up the fabric of our society. It is also and just as devastatingly the disregard of the informal rules which make it possible and *pleasant* for people to be joined together in a family or a community. All those informal rules such as religious commandments, manners, morals, profes-

sional ethics, sportsmanship, kindness, civility, integrity, civic-mindedness and charity are just as essential to the workable and enjoyable free society as are the public laws. We talk about a thirteen-percent increase in serious crime, and this makes us uneasy. But we should be at least as concerned about the increase in the rate of self-centered, callous disregard for the well-being of other people. It is my guess that this rate, too, increased by at least thirteen percent last year.

The damage caused by this trend, however, does not just take a toll on group processes and group effectiveness. The individual is himself a victim. Rules are simply an official recognition that certain kinds of behavior are good and right and useful, and the opposite behavior is bad and wrong and destructive. As society rejects the belief that certain things are intrinsically good and other things intrinsically bad, it leaves the individual adrift on a bleak and oppressive sea of value-neutrality. The human psyche cannot handle this. If nothing is generally regarded as good and genuinely cherished and worth striving for, then no direction is forward. There can be no sense of accomplishment and progression in one's life, no basis for developing self-esteem. The blueprint for building a satisfying and productive life has been shredded.

When I served on the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse, it became perfectly clear that for the most part the bright and sensitive students, not those with limited brainpower, were the ones in trouble with drugs. In the same way the bright students were over-represented in the revolutionary, destructive activities of the sixties and the bright ones are now trapped by the mindless and devastating religious cults. If the larger society does not say to the young, "Here are some time-tested, creative, wonderful ide-

als to which to commit your life," then those people who tend to think and care about the state of the world are vulnerable to the blandishments of any nut who insists that he has found the truth and says, "Follow me to glory."

Commitment to Principles in the Past

Let us contrast this general situation with what prevailed two hundred years ago. Consider, for instance, the code of conduct which Patrick Henry says was instilled in him by his uncle.

To be true and just in all my dealings,

To bear no malice or hatred in my heart,

To keep my hands from picking and stealing,

Not to covet other men's goods, but to learn and labor truly to get my own living, and to do my duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call me.

Such a declaration not only sounds alien to our ears, it sounds fatuous. In today's culture, you and I would be embarrassed to make such a statement out loud, or uneasy if our chil-

Just Around the Corner

The Christian's Vital Signs

Basic indicators of a vibrant faith



the lighter Side

by Mark Pié

Yeah, I took an oath not to strike. But I had my fingers crossed.

dren did. But at the time our country was founded, there was still a dominant public belief in an open, proud commitment to principles and codes of behavior.

Gouverneur Morris, who was a representative of New York to the Second Continental Congress, is depicted in a biography by Theodore Roosevelt as a veritable tiger of moral principle. In the New York State Assembly, when a bill was introduced to meet the heavy costs of the Indian wars by issuing interest-bearing bonds, he led the opposition, criticizing the advocates of the proposal for their "criminal and selfish dishonesty in trying to procure a temporary benefit for themselves at the lasting expense of the community." He believed that each generation should pay its own way in this world and not burden its children with the costs of its benefits and follies. That kind of thinking, too, startles us and puts into rather sharp perspective the unprincipled governments of today that keep buying things they can only pay for by compromising the economy for future generations.

Think of the commitment to principle of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. The last phrase of that document was, "And for the support of this Declaration, we pledge our Lives, our Fortunes and our Sacred Honor." Things were different then. There were rules for honorable living and the culture supported those rules.

Let us return to the grandmother and her speech at the dinner party. After stating that

they seemed to have lost the things she thought most likely to endure, she told about her own father and her husband's father who had come to Chicago in the late 1830's. Picking up her narrative:

They were the real empire builders, and you children ought never to forget it. They traveled by water and stagecoach and prairie schooner and the light of faith. Your father was born on a canalboat on the way. You know that, of course, but I am sure you have no idea what a great woman his mother was. She raised five children on a farm they had out on the north branch of the Chicago River, and though she was a minister's daughter and had been gently bred, she went right out into the fields with a rake and a hoe to help your grandfather make that farm pay.

"You have no idea what a great woman she was," said the grandmother, and the greatness she referred to was living unflinchingly and gladly by the ideals and obligations and rules that she held to be the most important things in life. She was concerned that the young people in her family did not understand the true meaning of greatness, that they might suppose that greatness was measured by wealth or social standing or popularity, rather than by devotion to principles, and living by them gladly and faithfully.

As one who has been professionally involved for thirty-five years in education, I am convinced that we in this country have cheated several generations of students. We have not given them much of a chance to learn and understand and come to admire the message that this grandmother was trying to convey to her family.

We are surrounded and bombarded by magazines and plays, books, movies, television shows and newspapers, dramatizing the lives of foolish and petty people who wouldn't recognize a principle even if it bit them and drew blood. We are wallowing in cultural trash, and unfortunately we are influenced by what we read and hear and see and experience. There is a cumulative, corrosive impact of the cheap and sensational and degenerate subject matter poured over us by the contemporary culture. As noted before, the statement by Patrick Henry sounds awkward and silly to our ears today, even if we still secretly believe in the importance of its message.

Reintroducing Honor

This circumstance, like any other, can be remedied if we understand it and are willing to put some effort into the remedy. Repeatedly it has been my experience that today's young people respond at least as readily as any generation to worthy challenge if we give them a chance—perhaps more so.

But too seldom do we give them the chance. It seems to me that one of the weightiest obligations upon parents, grandparents, teachers and clergymen is to labor constantly to introduce back into the culture the stories of people who make us proud to belong to the human race, people whose lives are guided by worthy principles, who sacrifice for those principles and serve as admirable models for all of us—the older generations as well as the younger ones.

We need to rediscover, circulate and make popular the

tales of hope and dignity and high accomplishment. It wouldn't take much effort and it would be an interesting undertaking for a family to pick the brains of their friends in order to develop a shelf of inspiring books for a home library, or for a faculty to do so for a school, or a few thoughtful citizens to do so for a public library. It would be a marvelous resource for every one of us to have access to a collection of books that can give us courage or laughter when we need it.

Television, of course, is where America goes to school seven days a week. There now are a number of organizations working one way or another to try to diminish the amount of sex and violence that is thrust into our homes. I support that goal, but I think it is even more important—much, much more important—to bring about an increase in the number of programs that showcase people who live by time-tested, worthy

rules. Programs should show people who live by the rules proudly and surely, not just for the fear of getting caught and penalized, but because they have a profound understanding that the rules are what make a society possible—and make it attractive and enjoyable, too—and because they also realize that those rules, or principles, are what give meaning and direction and a sense of fulfillment to the person's own life.

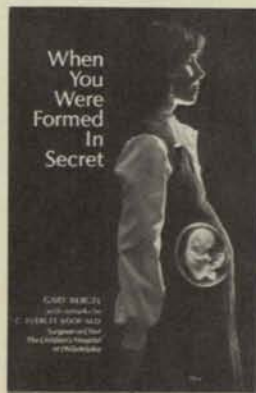
Let me conclude with a little story and a comment, and a riddle and a comment. The story: Once some students in a classroom were asked by the teacher to make a list of the people they considered the ten greatest Americans. One little child was still knitting his brow and puzzling long after the others were finished. Finally, the teacher asked, "Freddie, do you have a problem?" "I sure do, teacher; I've got my list almost finished, but I can't decide on the relief pitcher."

I wonder how many of us of any age have even a faint knowledge of the signers of the Declaration of Independence who, as one author noted, had "greatness to spare"? Theirs was that kind of greatness of which that grandmother was speaking. Could any of us draw up a list of ten Americans who really qualify for such a list? We have impoverished ourselves as a nation and a society with a culture that seems to have lost track even of the meaning of greatness. Much less does it choose to multiply, perpetuate and rejoice in greatness.

The riddle: How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb? The answer: Only one, but the light bulb *really* has to want to change. The problem I have tried to put into perspective in this article is, I believe, one that can be remedied; but that will only happen if enough people come to understand it, and genuinely desire to bring about the change. ♥

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the WORD

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Matthew 24:35

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees, and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you. . . . But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient . . . you will certainly be destroyed. . . . I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, and listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life.

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and clever in their own sight!

Isaiah 5:20-21 NAS

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Matthew 7:27

Modern Morality: Tampering With God's Law

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

2 Timothy 4:3-4

His truth endureth to all generations.

Psalms 100:5 KJV

You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. . . . Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations; you establish the earth, and it endures. Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you. . . . Righteous are you, O Lord, and your laws are right. The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy. . . . Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever.

Psalms 119:5, 89-91, 137-8, 152

Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker—an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, "What are you doing?"

Isaiah 45:9 NAS

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man. . . . Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised.

Romans 1:21-25

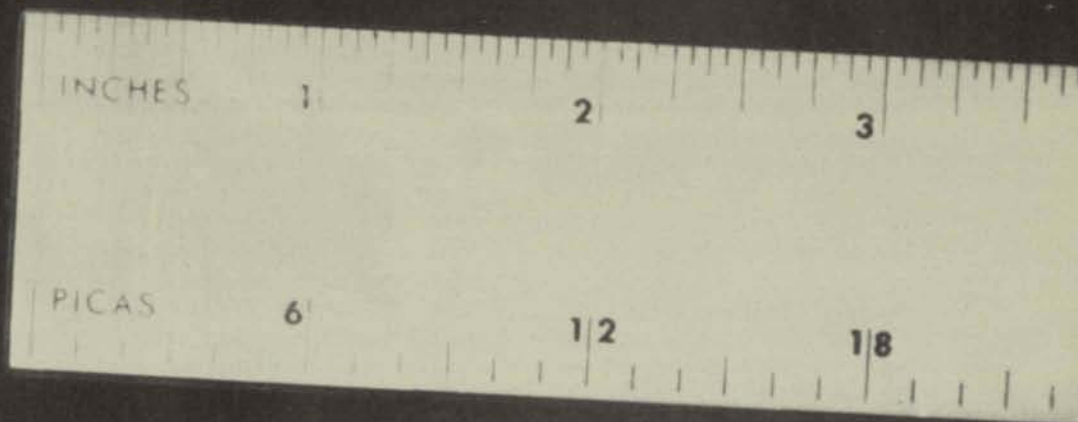
What man is wise enough to understand this? Who has been instructed by the Lord and can explain it? Why has the land been ruined and laid waste like a desert that no one can cross?

The Lord said, "It is because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them; they have not obeyed me or followed my law. Instead, they have followed the stubbornness of their hearts."

Jeremiah 9:12-13

God's Bureau of Weights and Measures

by Bob Mumford



Seldom does someone stop walking with the Lord simply because of a single cataclysmic event after which he rejects Christianity. Rather, some longer period of decline usually takes place—a slow “wooing away,” for one reason or another, by one means or another—that results in an eventual departure.

Most of us have seen situations in which some brilliant young man with great potential has a life-changing encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. For a number of months or years he lives by the sheer inertia of his initial experience. Then come the inevitable pressures—the slow wooing. It may be an unsaved girl friend, or perhaps the call to a career or educational achievement not in accordance with God's highest purpose for his life. A renewed longing for his old friends and his past life may pull him away from God. However insidious or gradual, the effect of such “wooing” is the same: *departure* from the known will of God.

In our own day there is a slow “wooing” of our society which threatens to overwhelm every aspect of Christian life and godly activity. There is an evil pressure—the Bible calls it a “mystery of iniquity” that cannot be understood but only described—which is subtly and inexorably wooing Christians away from basic morality and biblical ethics.

Sorting Out the Issues

Outright persecution, it seems, might be better for our Christian growth than the continued, subtle humanistic tide which is eroding our whole Christian way of life—for open persecution at least makes the issues clear. But instead, since the time of the Enlightenment, the Western world has been increasingly flooded with perplexing philosophies, psychological and behavioral theories, pseudo-intellectual and scientific research, and multiplied attacks against the authority of Scripture. The result has been the emergence of our present indi-

vidualistic, amoral and technological society. Our society is a conglomerate of lonely and despairing people struggling like some wild bull in a net!

Our purpose is not to rehash the problems or to review how bad things are, but rather in fairly simple terms to try to pinpoint the issues at hand and suggest some practical response to them.

When Jesus speaks, He has a way of getting us all in trouble. His statement that He is *the* Truth and *the* Way is absolutely unacceptable to this generation. Our society, which prefers a pluralistic philosophy, would certainly like us better if we agreed not to repeat Jesus' claim. The pluralist, who holds that there has to be more than one viable solution to the human dilemma, is on a collision course with those of us who hold Jesus Christ to be God's ultimate and only solution to the human predicament. Of course, we must beware of naive over-simplification, for the Church today faces a genuinely complex and intricate set of

problems. But with every problem, there is an accompanying possibility for which God has made provision.

Unfortunately, in its search for freedom, progress and the dignity of man apart from Christ, our society has broken loose from its foundations. The fundamental values and basic morality which are necessary to preserve our civilization are being washed away. The issues are now becoming ultimate. Survival of western civilization and our way of life is at stake. And we must face the possibility of *spiritual genocide*—that is, an increasing desire in our society to rid the world of people like us who insist that God's Word, God's Son and God's plan hold the answers they seek.

Society's Influence on Us

Few of us want to hear about basic morality. We have been so brainwashed by our society that we, too, are likely to say: "Don't talk about morality. Teach me something *helpful*!"

Nothing, however, could be more helpful right now than for us to be instructed about what is right and wrong. We must consider carefully what is moral, immoral or even amoral. Who can say what is wrong? Dare we let anyone impose his standard of behavior on us? Will an emphasis on morality destroy my individuality and personal liberties?

Most of our immediate responses to those questions may at first seem correct, but we have not taken into account the great corrosive influence television and other media have upon the world and the Church. Television in particular shapes our conscious thinking and influences



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our behavior more than we can imagine. When we talk about individuals who have done great harm to basic Christian morality—for example, John Dewey or Sigmund Freud—we should also include today's television producers who are influencing millions.

In 1 Corinthians 15:33, the apostle Paul wrote these words to a church that was similarly being infected and influenced by a worldly philosophy: "Don't be fooled by those who say such things. If you listen to them you will start *acting like them*" (LB; emphasis added). Paul's next exhortation (v. 34), to "get some sense and quit sinning," is an expression of practical pastoral care. The New International Version says "bad company corrupts good *character*," while the New American Standard Bible says it "corrupts good *morals*."

We must not suppose that just because we still love the Lord, say our prayers and have confidence in Christ, we have not been influenced by our society and by "trendy" theologians, pastors and bible teachers who teach the "latest thing." Their unscriptural innovations inevitably have a negative influence on the Church of Jesus Christ. When "everyone else is doing it," there is a tendency for us to become lax or even compromise ourselves.

Scriptural Clarity

The standard of God's Word, like a secure chain which anchors us, cannot be broken! This was the truth Jesus declared in John 10:35 with these words: "the Scriptures cannot be broken." Jesus saw God's Word as a permanent standard which should have a restraining influence on all humanity.

The ramifications of this truth should have great impact on us. If the Scriptures *cannot* be broken, and we are presently breaking God's Word in our own lives through our motives and actions, then what will be the consequences? If the Scriptures cannot be broken, we must real-

ize that eventually *they* will break *us*. The law of gravity can be defied, superceded and interrupted—but it cannot be broken. Eventually, gravity will claim its own—and so will God's law.

A society or an individual can mock, reject and deny the Scriptures, but God's Word cannot be broken. Just as the man who jumped from the seventy-fifth story of a building declaring, "I'm free, I'm free" eventually had to reckon with the law of gravity and a sudden stop, so must our society eventually reckon with God's law.

Every society—past, present, and future—must come to grips with the eternal nature of God, His Word and His inexorable purpose. We go through sexual, moral and ethical revolutions, crying "I'm free," but like the man who tried to defy gravity, we have yet to reckon with God's eternal Word. God's Word cannot be broken. In the end it breaks us.

I have likened God's Word to a *chain*. The Scripture uses many other metaphors—such as a yoke or the burden of the Lord—that contrast this Word to the so-called freedom which is so ardently pursued in our day of licentiousness. In Romans 6:16 the apostle Paul makes it clear that there is no such thing as pure personal freedom. We are, says the apostle, either "slaves of sin resulting in death, or slaves of obedience, resulting in righteousness." Either way we are still slaves!

Individuality vs. Individualism

True freedom is a gift of the Creator. It was Jesus who came to set us free. The longer I live and the more I learn the clearer I see that all mankind has but two options: slavery to sin or slavery to obedience.

The world, as well as many of God's own, are in the process of subjectively "feeling" their way along, failing to understand the place and purpose of God's Word. Many think that any

creed which sets a standard or calls people out of their individualism must be labeled "legalistic" and swept aside. But apart from God's Word and His clear prescriptions and requirements, we would all be drowning in a sea of subjectivity in which the only guidelines would be "I feel... I think..."

Individualism is anarchy dressed up in modern psychological garb. Individuality is biblical and must be carefully preserved. Individualism destroys true freedom and real happiness. This *ism* is a root cause of the dissolution of essential groupings which are based on loyalty and mutuality, especially the family and the church. Individualism is most often found in an affluent society. The description "independently wealthy" is a revealing allusion to the association of individualism with wealth.

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12 presents a profound message on the place of individ-

uality in the Church. God deals with individuals. Each of us is loved for himself. We are not to be swallowed up in "collectivism." There is a body and a family to which we must belong. But belonging properly involves our ability to distinguish between individualism and individuality.

The Kingdom of God is composed of righteousness, peace and joy. These are probably the most scarce commodities in the earth today. God has promised them to mankind with the understanding that *behind* the concept of the Kingdom of God are the principles of life and conduct which lead to freedom and happiness. True freedom is having the spiritual insight and maturity which prohibits us from doing anything but the will of God (1 Jn. 3:9; Rom. 6:16).

The contrast to true freedom we presently see in our society includes mental distress, anxiety and depression, all in epidemic proportions. Why? Because

God's commands have been ignored, rejected and superseded. He has repeatedly sent His messengers and patiently waited for our response. He has given us repeated opportunities for repentance, all of which are designed to rescue us from the inevitable consequences of our behavior. But our society remains in rebellion.

The question today is whether God requires obedience or not. If He does, our individualistic insistence upon "my freedom" and our resistance to the "bondage" such obedience demands must give way to an understanding that true happiness, prosperity and success are inextricably related to obeying the will of God (see Josh. 1:8 and Ps. 1).

Bureau of Weights and Measures

We must grapple with this essential issue of true freedom coming from obedience to God's law, for it directly affects the joy and fruit of our Christian lives.

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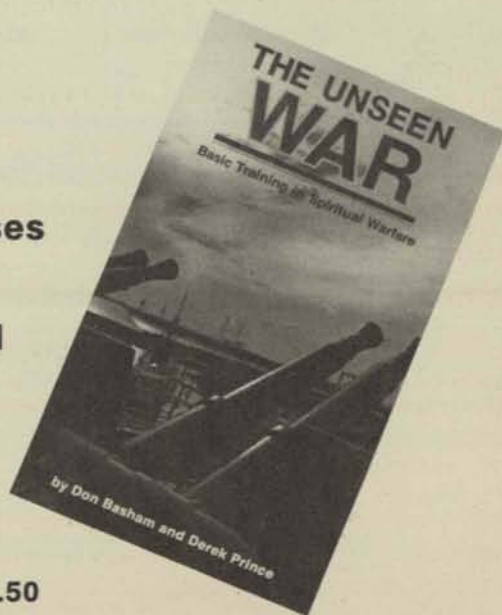
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It also affects our ethical and moral behavior.

In Washington, D.C., is the Bureau of Weights and Measures, and that bureau is "legalistic," for it insists that a gallon is a gallon. One pound *must* be sixteen ounces, and twelve inches, it decrees, shall constitute one foot—no more, no less.

Suppose that after my fishing

One of the premises of the true gospel is that God wants an ethically and morally distinguishable people.

trip, I "feel" I have caught a huge bass—at least eighteen inches long, and certainly weighing ten pounds or more by the "feel" of it. But my feelings are about to be subjected to the Bureau of Weights and Measures, which really does not care about my "feelings"—very callous and legalistic, I'd say. In reality the fish is nine inches long and weighs less than a pound. It may have *looked* bigger. It may have *felt* bigger. I surely *wanted* it to be bigger. But it is *not* bigger. And when truth and reality confront me, depression follows. Nevertheless, the depression is followed by righteousness, peace and joy, for God dwells in truth. Sin is simply a lie that is mixed with human depravity.

Emotional stress, anxiety and guilt plague us—both the saved and the unsaved—because we have questioned God's Word. Like the serpent speaking to Eve, we ask, "Hath God said?" and then we deny the consequences of our disobedience by asserting, "We shall not surely die!"

These are some of the standards we now use:

Rationality:

"I can see no harm in it."

Emotion:

"I feel like that's the thing to do."

Statistics:

"Everyone is doing it."

Egoism:

"I will if I want to."

Intuition:

"I just know it's right."

Conscience:

"My conscience doesn't bother me."

Innocence:

"I didn't know it was wrong."

Consequence:

"It doesn't harm anyone but me."

Motivation:

"God knows my heart."

However, wrong is not wrong because it makes us sad, prevents us from getting our own way, or denies us personal pleasure. *Wrong is wrong because God says it is wrong!* That is precisely why the realm of ethics is where the Christian message shines most clearly, for knowing the truth of God and His Word, we can arrive at this simple and helpful moral and ethical position: *Wrong is wrong because God says it is wrong.* Consequently, we need not strive with situation ethics, drown in a sea of subjective unreality or go on our own stubborn way all the time wondering why we are not experiencing righteousness, peace and joy.

Levels of Aspirations

In recent years, we have seen the encroachment into Christianity of "easy believism" or what has been termed the "sugar-coated gospel." One pitfall of "easy believism" is that it causes people to lose any motivation to become mature or holy. "God knows we are sinners," we assure ourselves, "and He loves us just as we are." (Unfortunately we fail to add that He does not intend to leave us as we are.) "We need only 'believe' and instantly we 'have' it all." But the fruits of such a "sugar-coated gospel"—our lack of influence and loss of credibility as Christians, and our inability to distinguish the "saved" from the "unsaved"—should prompt us to

seek some clearer understanding of God's Word and God's standard for a society that is destroying itself while we stand by naively quoting Bible verses. One of the premises of the true gospel is that God wants an ethically and morally distinguishable people.

As in most areas of our lives, we must search here for an elusive balance between extremes. On the one hand, "easy believism" sets a standard that is too low. It demands so little of us that we see no need to commit ourselves fully to it. "If I can be a Christian and still do whatever I want to do, why bother?" On the other hand, religious zealots usually set a human standard of conduct that is too high. Human demands and religious idealism always lead to pharisaism and eventually to despair. No one can continually live with joy in a situation surrounded by "religious" demands.

But God has set His standard—His "Bureau of Weights and Measures"—in His Son. The standard is absolute obedience and spiritual perfection (Dt. 6:5), and although this is impossible to mortal man, Jesus Christ has kept the standard for us. He imparts to us now that "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19), a consciousness of our righteousness in Him and the moral energy necessary to keep us from despair. Thus God in His infinite wisdom provides both the perfect standard He requires—being conformed to the image of His Son—and the means necessary to meet His requirement.

When Christ Jesus said plainly, "If you love me, keep my commandments," He was expressing the New Testament motivation that calls us up to personal morality and spiritual progress, while at the same time setting our obedience in a context of love. Our level of aspiration is determined by how well we comprehend what the issues are and by how fully we set our wills to attain that aspiration. Both knowing and doing the will

of God are rooted in our wills. Obedience is that internal decision to act and conduct ourselves in a certain way. The desire to obey is a fruit of regeneration, but it is also an evidence that it is God who is at work in us to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

Scripture as God's Standard

The Scriptures must always be our standard of life, love and personal conduct—not just when we “feel” the Spirit, but always, because the plain meaning of Scripture requires our obedience. Seldom in today's society does God's Word settle an issue. It may have limited authority for some, for it functions as one authority among others. But for most people, it has lost that ultimate authority which makes it the end of the matter!

But for our Lord, the Scriptures were always God's final Word. To Him, they were to be known, understood and obeyed whether one felt like it or not—regardless of the personal cost and inconvenience involved. Jesus said of Himself that He had come to do the will of His Father, to fulfill and complete the Law and the Prophets (Mt. 5:17). He who was Truth knew that the Scriptures were the power of God (Mt. 22:29; Rom. 1:16) and they could not be broken (Jn. 10:35).

To Jesus, the revealed will of God was in the Scripture rather than in man's own subjective impulses: “I think, I feel.” The Scriptures were always His final authority and standard of conduct (Mt. 3:15). He publicly recognized their authority and never superceded them (Mt. 19:4, 5). Both in private and in public life He gave Himself to God's standard of life and conduct. Although He was to be the judge of every man, Jesus constantly limited His own life and actions to conform to God's law. When in mortal conflict with Satan himself, the words “it is written” settled the issue for Him—and evidently for the tempter as well! Unfortunately

most of us seem unable to settle it that easily.

The End of the Matter

The psalmist “came close to stumbling” when he watched the wicked get rich and saw the material success of worldly people (Ps. 73:2-5). He complained that his attempts to walk in holiness and follow God's Word as his moral standard resulted in more chastening, and it just didn't seem fair (vv. 13-14).

Most of us have experienced the same or similar pressures. Like Habakkuk, I continually marvel at the degree and the extent of human degeneracy and bestial behavior which God permits and endures.

The psalmist was disturbed by the apparent prosperity of the wicked: “I pondered to understand this, and it was troublesome in my sight” (v. 16). But when he came “into the sanctuary of God”—into God's perspective—his viewpoint changed: “then I perceived their end” (v. 17).

In our day the emphasis on the natural and the immediate seems to have dimmed our vision of the eternal. However, our view of eternity is a necessary context for the proper understanding of moral issues. We must remember that God “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31 NAS). This man is Jesus Christ, God's “Bureau of Weights and Measures.”

A resurrection and a judgment are certain. Daniel says, “those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but others to disgrace and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2 NAS). The apostle Paul declares that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10 NAS).

This is a moral universe, in

spite of present appearances to the contrary. If we will accept and adhere to God's “Bureau of Weights and Measures”—His Son—rather than giving in to society's present pressures which call for compromise, we will be able to know right from wrong, and be protected from being “slowly wooed away” from the will of God. ♥

Did You Know?

Most magazines require an annual subscription fee from readers in order for them to continue receiving their publication. Since its beginning in 1969, however, **New Wine** has had a policy for keeping our readers current that is unorthodox in the magazine world. Since some of our readers write periodically asking what is required to remain on the **New Wine** mailing list, we want to take this opportunity to answer that question for all our readers.

Actually, staying on **New Wine's** mailing list is simple. All it requires is that you keep in touch with us regularly by mail. Every time you correspond with us, whether to comment on an issue or offer a suggestion, we update your subscription to six issues. A contribution or an order updates your subscription to twelve issues.

If we don't hear from you, we will write and ask if you wish to renew your subscription. If we receive no response, we will write again as you receive your last issue. If we still do not hear from you, we will write one last time two months after your last issue arrives. Your regular contact will save us the cost of sending these renewal requests.

To avoid receiving our notices and to stay current on our mailing list, just write us periodically. Any correspondence updates your subscription and assures your uninterrupted delivery of **New Wine**. It's just that simple—we thought you'd like to know.



Modern Morality: Tampering With God's Law

by Rousas John Rushdoony

Relativism in morality is essentially saying "my will be done" to God.

Recently three unrelated incidents have brought to my attention man's rebellion against God's standards and his attempts to establish a moral relativism based instead upon his own standards.

First I heard an evangelical biblical scholar attack the authority of the Holy Bible. He was intensely critical of the doctrine which says God not only gave an infallible word, but also protected its transmission. Such a doctrine, he said, would wipe out "biblical scholarship"—and he was right. Such "scholars" would no longer determine from various texts which was the authentic text. They would no

longer play god over God.

In a second incident a sexually immoral man admitted that he did not have as much sexual activity as his married friends; some of his activity was unsatisfactory; the risk of infectious disease was an inconvenience (and once a reality); and it could be at times very expensive. "But," he said, "there is nothing like it." When asked why, he grinned and answered, "The excitement of sin."

The third incident involved my book, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, which has upset many churchmen. Some have even been belligerent in their reactions, in print, by word, and to me personally. One man summed up what several others were also saying: biblical law is too *prescriptive*; such a way of life is obviously on a "lower" moral level, whereas the Holy Spirit (the man, by the way, was *not*

charismatic) leads us to a "higher" moral plane. Higher than God's law? What higher moral precepts could he offer, or what new way had the Spirit shown him? In answer to those questions, he first was vague, but then he became angry. There I was, being *prescriptive* again! But he was mistaken. Not I, but God's Word, is *prescriptive*. It says clearly and infallibly, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Is. 30:21).

Rebellion Against God's Prescriptions

Almost from the beginning, man's problem has been his rebellion against God's prescriptive way. For this reason, man was ready to listen to the tempter's challenge, "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1). In his rebellion, man says, "There He goes, that narrow-minded God, prescribing again, when it is every



man's right to be his own god, determining law and what is good and evil for himself [Gen. 3:5]. Why should there be a God-prescribed law, a God-prescribed righteousness? It would be more spiritual" [and, remember, Satan is a spiritual being, though totally contrary to God the Spirit] "and men could reach a higher plane if cut free from God's prescriptions."

But after Adam, God went on prescribing! The Bible is His prescription for man. It tells us what God *requires* of man. The Bible is not an inspirational book; it tells us the truth about ourselves, and proclaims it widely: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). Through it the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin (Jn. 16:7-9) and brings us to our knees in tears. (How humiliating!) The Bible was given as an inspired book, not necessarily an inspiring one, and as a book of

commands, not one of friendly suggestions.

But today men have abandoned God's law as the definitive standard of morality. They have willfully set aside God's law in favor of their own ways, and they have insisted that man is the measure of all things.

In a long and intense editorial on June 9, 1981, *The Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* expressed horror concerning the position on abortion taken by Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. They concluded, "And we're getting more worried each day that anti-choice politicians are beginning not to care *what* their constituents think on this issue. After all, as Sen. Helms recently proclaimed, his instructions come not from mortal voters, but from Mount Sinai. We may be in for some real trouble." The idea that man should look to God for law rather than to man (or the voters) was most offensive to that editor.

Who Is Sovereign?

The issue, of course, is one of lordship—or, in modern language, "sovereignty." The lord or sovereign over a society is its god and lawmaker. He is the owner of all things, and by his total government all things live, and move, and have their being in and under him.

Our problem is that our sovereign is no longer the God of Scripture. As a people and as nations, we have made the state our sovereign. The word "sovereignty" was deliberately left out of the U.S. Constitution; the writers felt that the term could only be applied to God, not to a civil government. But the federal government and all the states now routinely assert their sovereignty, that is, their deity and lordship over man. The lawmaker in any system is always the actual god of that social order. As far as millions of Americans in our day are concerned, the lord over this country is clearly not the God of Scripture.

Our laws today witness that another god has dominion over us. Homosexuality is legalized; abortion is legal and has, in a few years, snuffed out over eight million lives. Our laws, whether important or trifling, are usually humanistic in purpose, and the religious premise of democracy from ancient times to the present is very much in evidence: *vox populi vox dei*, "The voice of the people is the voice of God." This new god certainly does speak, but not with grace.

The moral issue is thus closely tied to the question of sovereignty. Who is the lord? Christ or the state; God or man? Our nation, and every nation today, is in great need of confessing, in Isaiah's words, "O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name" (Is. 26:13). Those who believe that the triune God of Scripture is the Lord will obey His every word (Matt. 4:4). They will know that God's Word is Spirit-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16); that God-breathed Word is law, grace, salvation and reproof. Through and *in* this prescriptive Word, the Spirit speaks of sin, righteousness or justice, and judgment (Jn. 16:7-10)—"and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17).

Men, of course, define liberty in various ways. Man in revolt against God defines his rebellion as freedom. Covenant-keeping man sees God's law as liberty. In fact, James speaks of "the perfect law of liberty" (Ja. 1:25), informing us that God's



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law is perfect, and it is our liberty. All who understand this become doers, not forgetful hearers.

"Almighty" Man

In discussing moral relativism, a subtle but basic distinction must be made. The term "moral relativism" usually refers to the humanistic standards of our day, situation ethics, existentialism, and similar schools of thought. In such thinking, morality is stripped of any binding character; the issue becomes instead, "What suits me?"

The Bible was given as an inspired book, not necessarily an inspiring one, and as a book of commands, not one of friendly suggestions.

However, such relativism is only with respect to the moral law which man opposes—in this case, God's law. What man is actually saying is that his own will is the absolute moral law, and all things must be brought before the court of "almighty" man for judgment. All law is then made relative to man.

The Bible, however, is very clear that all law is relative to God. It is an expression of His sovereignty; it sets forth His holiness and righteousness (or judgment); and it witnesses to His life and Spirit. We cannot be in and of the Lord and out of obedience to His law-word. As Harold J. Brokke wrote, "Rightly or wrongly, whoever and whatever receives our supreme preference and obedience is *god* to us. . . . *God* has revealed His will; *man* must decide who shall be *God*."¹

Moral Relativism Among Christians

Moral relativism, that is, humanism in ethics, infects many

who profess to believe the Bible from cover to cover. An example is given by a pastor in a major denomination who talked to me a few years ago about the triumph of women's ordination and homosexual "rights" in that church. He said that if the men who professed to be evangelical and/or reformed (i.e., Bible-believing) had stood firm, both causes would have been defeated. What led these ostensibly believing pastors to vote in favor of the ordination of women and homosexual "rights"? Their stance was this: We need to make our stand and witness at the key point—that is, the need to be born again—and to keep our lines of communications open on "peripheral" issues. One prominent seminary professor and conference speaker has told students that, while he believes in the infallibility of Scripture, he regards it as unwise to stress it, because "it is a divisive doctrine."

However, there is a problem in that approach. If we feel that we have the liberty to go to God's Word and take from it anything less than the whole of it as our standard, we have denied its finality and authority. We then treat it as a resource to use at our will—a human will. Notice what happens: the pastors in the denomination who compromised made their stand at one point, man's salvation. If this is our battle line, we are humanistic indeed, because our Lord says clearly, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness [or justice]; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). The Lord makes His Kingdom and justice first. Our salvation must be viewed in terms of God's Kingdom purposes; we are saved to glorify, praise, and serve Him. The purpose of our salvation is God-centered. Thus, we may profess to believe all of God's Word, but if we make our salvation rather than God's Kingdom the focus of the gospel, we have introduced an alien standard and are in the same camp as the humanist. The law then is the

will of man, not the infallible and holy law-word of God.

It is humanist thinking and a denial of God's absolute standard to impose our will on the Lord. In a choice between our wishes and God's law, God's law must prevail. We dare not rationalize our wishes into holy causes. Some years ago, I warned a friend (who has not spoken to me since) against going into debt. His cause, he told me, was the Lord's work, and he was right. What he intended to do was an excellent plan, he protested, and very important for Christ's Kingdom. Again he was right. He thought this justified his going heavily into debt for the cause, and it was in his eyes a mark of faith to do so. But here he was very wrong. The Bible warns against going into extensive debt. What he planned to do was sin, and sin does not become virtue even if we sin supposedly for Christ's sake. This man's idea was good, but the Lord was obviously requiring him to proceed at a slower pace than he wanted.

For man to force his timing on God is sinful and no less offensive to God than the sin of the unbeliever. Sin is sin, whoever commits it. Your sins and mine are no less fearful because we believe in the Lord, nor are they any the less an evidence of a moral relativism in us.

Becoming God-Centered

We live in a world whose law is "do your own thing"; express or realize yourself; be "free." Our laws are man-made. Our money is fiat money; our politics are governed not by God's law, but by the will or vote of man. At every turn, the emphasis is humanistic and relativistic. It is easy to cite evidences of moral relativism, but becoming God-centered ourselves is another matter. We want our lives to be the center, and when we are saved, too often we ask God to agree to our centrality.

Some years ago, I met a church officer who was a large and generous giver to various

Christian causes. He was also an adulterer who thought, in view of his many services to the church, that the Lord would overlook his periodic flings. He felt "entitled" to an occasional sin. If we think that we can go only so far in obeying God, picking and choosing which of His laws we think are "necessary" for us to obey, we are sinners and no better than that church officer. We cannot put God in our debt or buy exemptions and indulgences for ourselves. Our Lord teaches us that, having done all that the Lord requires, we are still to say, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Lk. 17:10).

What is needed in our day is an uncompromising adherence and obedience to every word of God. We need to heed Joshua's call for a clear-cut faithfulness: "And if it seems evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served

that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: *but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (Josh. 24:15).

In our Lord's day, Rome and Greece were centers of humanism, moral relativism and sexual "revolution." Moral conditions then were probably far worse, far more flagrantly evil, than now. We must expect such behavior from fallen man. It is, after all, the logical outcome of man's fall. We must also expect that a society which abandons God's perfect law sentences itself and is sentenced by God to a severe judgment. Deuteronomy chapter 28 and Leviticus chapter 26 spell out this fact very plainly. In God's universe and in God's own time, every man who denies His lordship pays to the last farthing (Matt. 18:34-35).

Nevertheless, the ancient world was changed by the uncompromising faith of the early Church, and the world today

can only be changed by the power of God producing salvation and sanctification in and through us. In every age, the people of power are the faithful sons of God by the adoption of grace, for "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on his name" (Jn. 1:12).

The world is manifesting what we should expect from it. The problem is that professing Christians are not manifesting faith. If Christians are faithful, they will inevitably be victorious. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4). We are called to be "Dominion Men" (Gen. 1:26-28). If we are faithful, who can stand against us as we establish God's law and standard? ▼

¹Harold J. Brokke, *The Law is Holy*, 1963, p.33.

Christ, The Moral Governor

Christ is the One who is set forth as the Moral Governor. His life is the moral standard by which all men everywhere shall be judged. The scepter of righteousness and of equity has been placed in His hand.

1. *We need to see Him as the LAW-GIVER.*
2. *We need to see Him as the LAW-INTERPRETER.*
3. *He is the LAW-KEEPER.*
4. *He also PAID THE PENALTY for the broken law.*
5. *Finally, He gives us the POWER TO KEEP His law.*

The effect of God's law is to bring all things into subjection to Christ.

Taken from "Christ as Moral Governor" by Bob Mumford, which appeared in the July/August 1977 issue of *New Wine*.

the lighter Side

of Morality
by Mark Pié



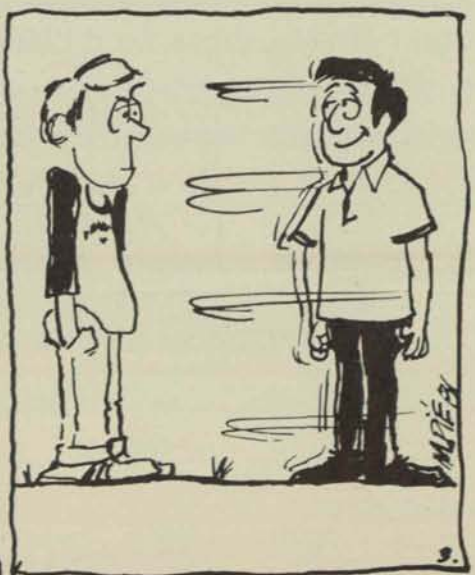
Just how literally are these to be taken?



Now that you're here with us, Lord, it might be a good time to discuss the "F" I got in math today.



If I'm lying, may lightning strike me on this very spot.



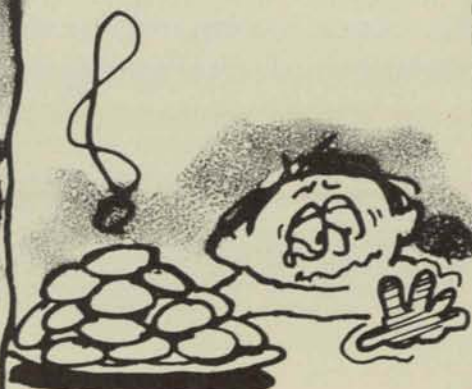
Johnny, don't eat those cookies!!



Arrg!
Umpt!



WHAM!



IT'S NOT EASY BEING A MAN
OF CONVICTIONS.



To the Point



"To the Point" is a regular feature in New Wine in which members of our Editorial Board are given the opportunity to comment on the chosen theme of the month. In this issue Charles Simpson offers some insights into the moral decline of our society.

NW: How would you define "morality"?

CS: I would define "morality" as a standard of right and wrong, of good and evil. Morality is a word that we all use, but what we mean by it varies widely from person to person and from culture to culture.

NW: How would you categorize the various approaches to morality that we find in societies today?

CS: It is obvious that there are people who have no morality at all—*amoral* people. They don't believe in any standard of right or wrong. Then there are those who acknowledge some type of morality but who flagrantly violate it, and thus are basically *immoral*. Then there are people who ascribe to a type of morality which differs considerably from God's standard of morality or what we would term biblical morality. Their morality is a "situation ethics" type of morality.

When you add to this the people who recognize biblical morality, yet do not adhere to it because of the influences of the larger society and weakness in their personal moral fiber, all of this combines to produce moral anarchy.

NW: So it would seem obvious then that society is in a state of moral decline.

CS: I believe it is. But I think it is important for us

to establish that fact, because there are those in our society who would consider that to be a debatable point. Many people in our society are under the illusion that we are morally "progressing"—that our society is somehow "evolving" into a higher form. Such a notion has been strongly held in many educational, academic, political and theological circles since the Renaissance. As one philosopher expressed this belief: "Every day, in some way, man is getting better."

Nevertheless, many other people have come to realize that despite man's technological progress, man has not been bettering himself morally. Some years ago a reaction of cynicism set in, a despairing attitude that no matter what we do, nothing will get better. Presently, cynicism is more characteristic of our society than optimism, and that cynicism is based on a growing mistrust of humanity.

The growing rates of crime and violence are evidence for that mistrust. When officials in Miami, for instance, must say to the citizens, "You need to protect yourself, because we can't protect you," when statistics in Seattle indicate that most burglaries there are performed by people who have already been arrested and are out on bond awaiting trial, the reality of a moral decline in our society is undeniable. Statistics document the decreasing stability of the family and society in general as our traditional moral standards are being seriously challenged and abandoned.

NW: What do you think are the primary causes of our society's moral decline?

CS: We don't want to be simplistic—there are a number of reasons for it. But I would say that the primary reason has been the loss of a biblical foundation for our public and private standards of behavior. A number of years ago there began a concerted effort throughout our educational institutions to dethrone the Bible as the ultimate standard of human behavior in our nation and throughout the world. This "age of enlightenment," so to speak, has brought many technological benefits, but tragically it has wrought tremendous spiritual devastation as well.

I would compare the change in moral authority to the removal of our nation's economy from the gold standard—with the resulting chaos. Once we remove our activity from some absolute standard, we are left with a high degree of subjective relativism. Everyone then decides for himself what his standard of behavior will be, subject to his own individual whims and idiosyncracies. Much of our nation's leadership, our court system, our political system and our academic system is governed by this type of rational humanism. The Bible, which presents an eternal absolute standard, has been removed as the predominant influence on morality in our country. We have left our historic foundation.

The second reason for the moral decline—closely related to the first—is the gradual dissolu-

tion of the family. Until recently the family was entrusted with the responsibility of instructing children in morality. But parents are being strongly challenged now by the state and the schools. In many schools it is fashionable to teach children that parents do not really know what is best for the child, but that the school or the state knows best. The result has been that early in their lives—through the influence of school and community life (and television as well)—children learn to resist parental authority. Consequently, parents do not have the moral influence on their children that they once had.

The third factor in moral decline is the geographical mobility of our society. We have become such a mobile people that we have been destabilized. The average family now is moving so frequently that normative social infrastructures are constantly being destroyed—family life, school life, church life, neighborhood life and friendships are all being affected.

A fourth factor in the present moral condition is the pervasive materialism of our society. In that sense we have become essentially a heathen society. The first priority for many in our society has become “self-fulfillment,” a goal which often is selfishly materialistic. This attitude militates against a biblical morality, which is based not on “self-fulfillment,” but on self-discipline and self-sacrifice.

NW: *What consequences of the moral decline in our society do you see?*

CS: In our own nation, one highly visible result of the abandonment of absolute moral values is an epidemic of crime. Crime has become a major American problem, a runaway cancer in some cities where it is out of control. The low percentage of criminals that are actually caught and sentenced encourage further criminal activity. We have become a society that is unprepared and incompetent to deal with the lawbreaker.

Another result of moral decline is poverty. I believe poverty is a result of immorality. I don't mean by this that the poor person is necessarily immoral, but rather that a society's *corporate* immorality helps to produce poverty. When a society repudiates the standards of God, and in selfishness and injustice ignores the person who is either disabled or disadvantaged, it produces widespread poverty.

But crime and poverty are both results and *causes* of the moral problem—as are divorce and the breakdown of the family. It is like “the chicken or the egg” riddle—no one can say which comes first, because it is a cycle. Once morality declines, families begin to dissolve, poverty increases and criminals are produced. To deal with any part of the cycle we must deal with all of it.

NW: *Are there other, far-reaching consequences of the present morality which have yet to be manifested?*

CS: Yes. Recently I studied some of the notoriously destructive characters of modern history: Stalin, Hitler, Andres Baader (founder of the Baader/Meinhof Gang in Germany which killed eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics), Jim Jones, Mao Tse-Tung. I found an alarming similarity in their family lives—they all had pathological family environments that formed them and had a tremendous impact on their views. This discovery makes me wonder how many more like them we are currently producing to be loosed on society.

The consequences of the decline in family life are not at all clear to us yet. We are only seeing the “tender green shoots” of evil, and who can tell what will appear when it comes to full fruition? Who could have guessed by looking at little Adolf Hitler—apparently a spoiled boy, raised by a doting, indulgent mother—that the fruit of his seemingly childish rebellion would be the murder of millions of people and the death of untold others killed in war? The consequences of moral decline that we are now experiencing are by no means the full consequences; they are only the beginning of consequences—unless our society changes. Unfortunately, it not only takes thirty-five years to recognize what is happening in society; it takes that long as well to change society, because to do that we must raise another generation.

NW: *What can we do to reverse the decline in morality?*

CS: Let me say first that I believe there is an antidote to the decline. I think a distinct possibility exists that there will be some tremendous social change in the right direction. I do not expect society to be saved apart from Christ, but I do believe that God's redemptive purposes are at work and God's work apparently begins with repentance. The Holy Spirit is working to show people their need for repentance.

I think we are coming to a better understanding of repentance. Many people have looked at repentance somehow as a religious term that applies to people who have done some terrible thing.

Repentance, however, deals not only with a specific act, but with the *attitude* that says, “we know how to run our own affairs.” “We have



turned every man to his own way"—that is what we must repent of. The person who has not done a specific terrible deed, but who is running his life by some set of principles alien to God's Word, needs to repent just as much as a person who has committed murder or adultery or thievery. It is "our own way" that has spawned our nation's moral anarchy.

Our nation is discovering that many of the principles promulgated during the last one hundred years and taught in seminaries and pulpits are actually delusions—they don't work. Now the Church itself needs to repent for having forsaken God's agenda for the secular agenda—and God's Word for secularism. Before the nation can be strongly influenced by the Church, the Church must undergo repentance. That repentance needs to begin in the pulpits of our country where ministers have forsaken the Word of God to become "trendy." The pulpits of our nation have committed a major sin against the people and against God and I think God holds the clergy accountable for that sin.

The seminaries of our nation as well need to repent for having participated in the destruction of the faith of young students, injecting into their spiritual veins secular poisons and redefining traditional terms by filling them with new doubts and new philosophies. I would liken it to taking the label from a can of edible food and putting it instead on a can of poison. This has happened on

a grand scale in our institutions so that many people have been infiltrated by alien philosophies, alien standards and alien spirits.

The church members in the pew need to repent as well because they have fostered the clergy's sin by their tithes and offerings. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 4:3 that people will support such teachers because the "new gospel" is permissive and makes a way for them to walk in their own desires. Thus the man in the pew needs to repent because he has subsidized an alien gospel and failed to exercise his own priesthood before God.

In all these ways the religious community needs to repent. If it does not repent, it will not prevent God from achieving His purposes; He will simply lay aside those institutions that have fraudulently represented Him and work through someone else.

Repentance is the key word, and that repentance must be more than repentance for a particular act. It must be a repentance for having ignored the lordship of Jesus Christ, the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in favor of secular ideas which have promised utopia and produced anarchy.

NW: What can we do beyond repentance?

CS: After repentance, we need to take a new look at the lordship of Jesus. We must realize that His teachings are timeless, His Spirit is eternal, and that He rules at the Father's right hand. He still

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represents our only way out of our problems.

We need to take a new look at the Bible. The Bible is more than a book about right and wrong; it is a book about the purposes of God, and the average man on the street as well as the average man in the Church is ignorant about God's purpose in the earth. Only as we discover God's purpose can we move ahead morally.

I believe the moral discipline of any people is directly related to their sense of purpose. Whenever any group of people lose their sense of purpose, their moral discipline begins to decline. There are Marxists who are more disciplined morally than many Christians—not because they have a better standard, but because they have a clearer vision of what they want to do. Through discipline they eliminate those things from their lives which hinder their purposes. But a Christian who gives lip service to biblical morality, yet has lost his sense of purpose, is very often powerless to live even by his own moral standards.

The book of Proverbs says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (29:18). The New American Standard Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained"—that is, they do not have the ability to restrain and discipline themselves.

I would go even further to say that one of our major problems is that the Church in general has no vision for society. Consequently it has opted for visions perpetrated by various forms of humanism, such as Marxism. The pulpits have thus become conduits for a variety of visions, because the theological community itself has not presented a comprehensive vision. We cannot simply say to the world, "Your vision is wrong," without offering an alternative.

NW: *What do you think of the efforts of groups like the Moral Majority to change the moral climate of the nation?*

CS: I support practical efforts to improve the moral standards of our country, and I think that every Christian ought to be careful about criticizing such "moral movements." While I do not consider myself a fundamentalist, I am in great sympathy with men like Jerry Falwell who are making an attempt to call our people back to the standards of God. I support the Coalition for Better Television; I support other ministries and evangelists who are calling attention to immorality, who are sounding the alarm to our entire nation. Christians should not be duped into being critical of them. It is fashionable these days to be critical of such groups. That is a foolish thing to do, because it is just a parroting of what secularists are saying.

NW: *What would be the characteristics of a society founded on biblical morality?*

CS: The Kingdom of God offers a context for living righteously with a sense of purpose. It offers us a



significance, a calling which is beyond self-gratification: pleasing God and serving our fellow man. An unselfish love is the fundamental characteristic of life in the Kingdom of God (I say unselfish to make it clear that I speak of divine love).

Divine love offers a basis for social structure beginning with the family. Only in selflessness can social structure be maintained. If all of society were to accept self-fulfillment as its goal, then anarchy would be the result. But in a society where people have a relationship to God which brings its own rewards and sets their moral attitudes, a man can act in his wife's best interests; she can act in her husband's best interests; and the children can act in their parents' best interests. Thus they learn the principles of morality which make them fit for living in a larger society.

Righteousness and justice would characterize such a society because people would constantly seek to act in the best interest of their neighbors, rather than for self-gratification. Economic abundance would characterize such a society because people would be productive rather than lazy; they would give themselves to producing more than they use. Infants would be cared for rather than aborted, as they are in America where millions of babies are being murdered before they have a chance at birth. There would be appropriate care for the young, not only at birth but throughout their infancy. Mothers would not be away building their careers at the expense of their children. Fathers would be caring for their wives and offspring. There would be proper care for the disabled and the sick—a concern which is prevalent only in a selfless society. A selfish society will find a way to isolate or eradicate such people.

All these things do not come from selfishness and humanism (and I equate the two)—they come from a morality that is conceived in the Spirit—the government of God. Some people may ask whether a society based on God's absolute values

will work. My reply is that it is the only system that *will* work.

NW: *How would you respond to those who say Marxism or some other type of socialism is a workable alternative to a Christian society?*

CS: Some people do regard Marxism and other types of socialism as an alternative to a Christian society, but socialism has not worked economically or sociologically. The only thing that holds Marxist countries together is military might. If the military force that propagates Marxism were neutralized, the people in Marxist countries that have been under Marxist government for any length of time would clamor for freedom—just as people in Poland today are clamoring for freedom. The Berlin wall is a multi-billion-dollar testimony to Marxism's failure.

NW: *What do you think is the choice facing our society right now?*

CS: I think that, more than facing a simple choice, our society is in the midst of a war, and behind that turmoil are spiritual forces. This may seem strange to some, but I would say the strikes and other social breakdowns that regularly take place are the results of spiritual pressure.

There are suicidal forces loose in our society. The choice is between self-sacrifice and selfishness, between God's standard of submitting our-

selves to him—which means self-sacrifice—and humanism, which holds out the promise of self-fulfillment through indulgence. That is the "choice." But our society cannot choose clearly or objectively because it is under tremendous spiritual pressure.

The pressure comes in one direction from the Holy Spirit, convicting us through the judgment of God on our nation, and in the other direction from our spiritual enemy, tempting us and seeking to draw us after him. Every individual in our society—even the children—are under these pressures, and they are intensifying.

I think it is incumbent upon Christians everywhere to present a clear word to society, saying as Joshua did, "Choose this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." We must make it clear that the choice is actually a matter of either following God's ways or running down a path proven wrong. Perhaps if we are inconvenienced enough, and if we experience enough crime and disease and other problems, our troubles will help us to see that we need God; we need Jesus Christ; we need the Holy Spirit; we need the Bible.

I think all of us would feel safer if we knew that our neighbors believed and were committed to Jesus Christ. The world would be quite a different place if we were all seeking to live under the leadership of Jesus Christ. My prayer is that people will be favored by God to be able to choose His way. ▼

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Dear New Wine,

Need for Christian writers

As a journalism student nearing graduation, I would like to express my sincere thanks for your June issue, "The Media: How They Shape Our Society." The evident need for committed Christian writers is obviously not as "hidden" as the enemy would have many of us believe. The articles in this issue gave me a great deal of insight, direction, and joy!

Charles D. Brunt
Albuquerque, NM

Changes are a witness

Our recent household meeting had a discussion of Bert Ghezzi's "How to Get Angry the Right Way" [June '81]. A non-Christian friend came and the talk became an excellent witness for the Lord and the changes He's wrought in our lives.

Tom Bishop
Mexico, MO

Appeal to the masses

More and more I find that I am looking through the table of contents for the names Basham, Baxter, Mumford, Prince and Simpson, finding them less frequently, and finding little else of great value. Instead of solid teaching we now find interviews with nominal Christians and with non-Christians, and articles apparently designed to appeal to the masses of Christendom. There was a time when the aim was to teach those who desire to hear, rather than to entertain whoever will listen.

Stephen L. Rowe
Gray, ME

No monopoly

Most of the more intense, "deeper life" publications tend to be "house organs," promoting specific organizations and points of view. In contrast to this, I applaud the breadth of vision I have been noticing over the last year or two in *New Wine*. It has been a real blessing to read the interviews you have published with men of God who *don't* orbit in your circles! Kenneth Cooper, Jeremiah Denton and William Simon come to mind. This tells me of the security and sincerity of the editorial staff which believes that all truth is God's truth, and not the monopoly of any segment of His people.

Thomas C. Smedley
Roanoke, VA

Who is the enemy?

The issue on the media [July/August '81] contained a

vital and timely article by Derek Prince concerning the use of the media by Christians to criticize one another. The day after I read his article I picked up a newspaper and read of some horrible criticisms that were being tossed back and forth between two Christian groups during a convention. It saddens me to see the vast energy we expend in battling one another as compared to the energy we expend in the war we were called to fight—against the reign of Satan.

Lee McNeil
Cumming, GA

Undiluted Word of God

In Zimbabwe we need the undiluted Word of God to be preached and taught in all its force. There is much evil around, especially through witchcraft and ancestral spirit worship. It is very prominent in government. Our government licenses witch doctors so that they can practice openly! Recently we had, with a young couple in our church, a dreadful demonstration of this evil. Praise God for the good teaching the young wife had received while her husband was dying (but in two months' time was healed by the Lord Jesus). Your magazine contributes to this and may the Lord continue to bless you and lead you to publish enlightening facts and encouragement without fear or favor.

E. Nicholas
Umtali, Zimbabwe
South Africa

P.O. Box Z, Mobile, AL 36616

The editorial policy and purpose of *New Wine* is: (1) to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all nations, (2) to work with all Christian ministries for the maturity and unity of His Church, (3) thus making ready a people prepared for the coming of the Lord. We recognize that, according to the Scriptures, God uses men given as ministries to build His Church in the earth. However, the basis of our relationship is not primarily commitment to human personalities, but to Jesus Christ as Head, to the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate standard by which all revelation and practice is to be judged and to God's purpose for His people in the earth at this time, as interpreted by the Holy Spirit. *New Wine* is a non-subscription magazine supported by the voluntary contribu-

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