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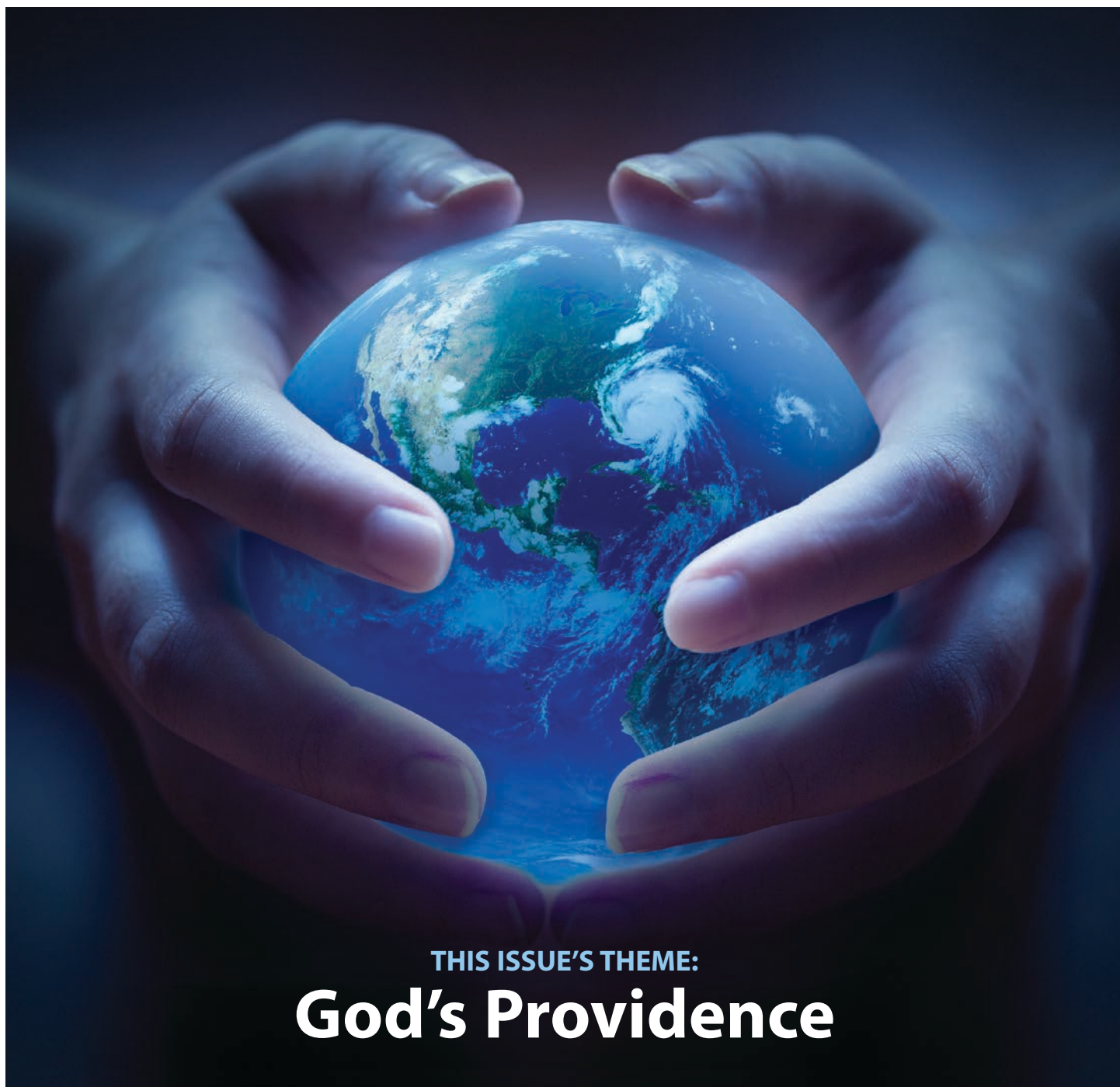
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THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

God's Providence

The Complete Kingdom

Geoffrey Ellis

The common use of “providence” is God’s timely and beneficial intervention in the affairs of his people. “By the providence of God, I was rescued from...!”

The word comes from Latin and has the meaning of *pro*, “ahead,” and *videre*, “to see.” Thus the derived usage is, “knowledge of the future,” or theologically, “omniscience,” and with divine direction.

Indeed, God is providentially in charge of this world: “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45). The Bible’s story is a panorama of Providence!

God’s providence is more than just prescience—yes, the end was in God’s all-knowing vision from before the beginning! More importantly, God’s providence is purposeful. His purpose includes the resolution of the human predicament. It is the deliverance of a people who, created after God’s image and endowed with intelligence and the freedom of will to choose whether to honour the Creator, inevitably chose their own wisdom over his, with the consequence—their death. The announcement of “the eternal gospel” (Rev. 14:6), points to that providential resolution.

The resulting life-death human experience and the gathering divine solution extend over the centuries. Eventually, the failure of Adam was countered in Abraham, in whose “seed,” i.e. “descendent,” (Gen. 13:15; Gal. 3:16), all the nations of the world would be blessed, according to God’s promise. What follows is providence big scale!

God’s providence is centered in his “kingdom,” the effect of his divine authority. His kingdom has three phases: (1) earthly “Israel,”

(2) the “assembly” of Christ, and (3) the eternal kingdom. God specifically prepared for phase two in phase one, and for phase three in both one and two. Each phase of God’s kingdom, while interconnected, is complete in itself.

(1) Earthly Israel

God formed Israel as a complete kingdom in this world. Through God’s intervention Israel had replaced the resident peoples of Canaan as promised (Gen. 12:5-8). He gave Israel his Law, as a Covenant with his people, that fully addressed spiritual, moral, political, and economic matters. Benefits of obedience to this covenant law included the promise of fruitful families, abundant crops, and divine protection against the marauding surrounding nations. Their fellowship with and worship of God centered, firstly in a tabernacle and subsequently in the temple in Jerusalem, that featured an extensive sacrificial system—including the absolution of their ever present sins.

In every way Israel was equipped for success as a holy nation among the nations of the world. This success depended not on their population size or military prowess, but on their faithful obedience to and confidence in God. Their legendary faithlessness resulted in a failed kingdom. However, this was countered by extensive prophetic promises of a future “golden age.” Increasingly, it became evident that in every way Israel’s earthly experience looked forward to and was modelling, i.e. as a “type,” the second phase of God’s kingdom on earth.

Concluding this first phase and providing for the victories of the second and third, is the advent of Christ.

(2) The “Assembly” of Christ

Two elements are merged in the second phase of God’s kingdom: obedient Jews of earthly Israel with God-fearing Gentiles (cf. Acts 10:1ff), are joined into one worldwide kingdom (see Eph. 2:11-22). Formed is the “kingdom of heaven on earth”—earthly in location while dominated by heavenly realities. This is the “New Israel” (see Gal. 6:16), the spiritual “anti-type” of earthly Israel. Christ the king, of the earthly lineage of king David, is declared to be “the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:40). He has all authority “in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). His commission to his followers is, “Disciple the nations” (v. 19). (The goodness of this present kingdom, i.e. “salt and light” (Matt. 5:13, 14), blesses this world. Yet its mission is not the reformation but the redemption of the world!)

Christ’s “Assembly” (ecclesia; persistently translated “church” in English versions), that he is “building” (Matt. 16:18), has an earthly presence that circles the globe, yet that has no territorial ambitions. Its enemies are clearly identified as the spiritual forces of wickedness; these are organized by the “prince of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” (Eph 2:2b).

The Assembly includes the faithful alive on earth. These have physical and social attributes that can be identified, e.g. in “congregations.” The reality of their spiritual identity, however, is known with certainty by the Lord who will judge all. The essential spiritual nature of the citizens of Christ is detected in two outward

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experiences of Christians: in their baptism and in their participation in the Lord's supper—the one at their beginning and the other in their continuing. Baptism is much more than an outward observance: in their immersion, the obedient are “buried with Christ” (Rom 6:4), a shared spiritual experience! In the supper, while a pinch of bread and a sip of grape juice are received, a whole world of spiritual reality is experienced. The communion is actual fellowship with Christ: in the bread is the acknowledgement that, as “the bread of heaven” (John 6:48,51), Christ nourishes all who absorb him as the “Way, Truth, and Life” (John 14:6); and in the cup, Christ through his death gives and nourishes spiritual life.

The Assembly is also referred to as “Mount Zion,” “the city of the living God,” and “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22). These are references that draw upon the experiences of “Earthly Israel.” They point, as well, to that spiritual reality to which Christians “come.” The kingdom of Christ exists firstly because of the authority of Christ, the king who rules from heaven. In this passage in Hebrews (vs. 22b, 23) three groups are listed as belonging to the kingdom: “innumerable angels in festal gathering,” “the assembly of the firstborn (ones) enrolled in heaven,” and “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (i.e. the departed faithful). These all honour “Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better work than the blood of Abel” (v. 24).

Spanning earth and heaven, the Assembly has a present reality that is superior to all the nations of the world combined. Its citizens should function in the full reality of this truth!

The completeness of this kingdom is noted in Peter's words: “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Pet. 1:3).

(3) The Eternal Kingdom

“To the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all ages, and through all eternity” (Jude 25). God's intent was to prepare a people that he would love eternally. Through his Son, the Word (John 1:1-4), who “became flesh and lived for a while among us” (v. 14), this goal, begun before Eden, became

possible (see, “the eternal purpose,” Eph. 3:11).

Time will tap into eternity and the saints into the eternal kingdom with the ending of this world as we know it (1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Pet. 3:10-12). This will include at the second coming of Christ: the resurrection of the dead (1 Thess. 4:13, 14, 16), the transformation of his holy ones yet alive (1 Thess. 4:15, 17), and the last judgment (Acts 17:31). “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13). As Jesus promised, “There are many rooms in my Father's house...I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may also be where I am” (John 14:2, 3).

Therefore, “Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Pet. 1:17-23).

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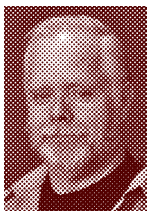
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Blessed by God's Providence

Wayne Turner



We have an amazing, loving heavenly Father. Do you ever really think about this? His care and provision for us seem to know no limits. Speaking of human fathers, Jesus asked what father, if their child asked for bread would give a stone, or asked for a fish would give a serpent. God knows our needs and provides for us. Jesus told us not to worry about what we are going to eat or wear. God will look after His people.

The word we use to describe God's care is Providence, often referred to as "Divine Providence." The words providence and provide come from the same Latin root. Essentially, they mean to "see before." It is recognizing needs (even before they arise) and acting to satisfy those needs.

Theologically, there are two different kinds of providence. The first is General Providence. This refers to God's provision for all. Wikipedia says this "refers to God's continuous upholding the existence and natural order of the universe." For example, God provides an environment for us to live in. Those things which are essential for our survival are readily available—air, food, water—just to begin the list. How long would we survive without reliable sources for these, and the many other things necessary for our survival? In Biblical terms, God sustains the universe, He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on all. This Providence give innumerable gifts to all creatures without distinction.

God's Providence is also seen as "Special Providence" which "refers to God's extraordinary intervention in the life of people." In the Bible, this is seen in miracles. For us, it is an important reason why we pray. We know that God, in His love for His people, hears and answers prayer. He is concerned about us, especially our needs.

Perhaps this becomes most significant to us in knowing that God is with us. God's Spirit indwells us, Jesus promised to be with His disciples. We are not alone. As we consider this, we think of a loving father who both sees and anticipates his children's needs. The latter especially demonstrates the meaning of providence. It was spectacular when God led Israel in the wilderness by pillars of cloud and fire, providing water, manna, quail. Even God's selection of Moses to lead Israel from Egypt were part of His Providence. Salvation was planned before the creation.

Similarly, God has appointed leaders in the church, not by miraculous call, but by giving His qualifications

to identify their character and spiritual maturity, so Paul could say that "God gave some to be apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers." God has provided for His people.

Personally, many of us have experienced God's Providence through the circumstances that led to our salvation and the blessings he gives His people, as well as our answered prayers. It can be sensitive to discuss answered prayer, yet, as Christians, we have experienced it. We pray for the sick. When they recover do we acknowledge God's mercy, His providential care? We may even have seen times when the answer to our prayer is more immediate if not even exceptional than we imagined. We have to admit that not all prayers receive what was requested. Sometimes people don't get better and die. Yet still, we acknowledge God's will and Providence are present.

We really don't think about Providence. Yet, it deserves our attention. We need to be aware that God is working in the world to accomplish His purposes and care for His creation and His people. This issue of the Gospel Herald will help begin that study. Paul Birston, as he does each quarter, has put together an excellent collection of articles about Providence. In "The Complete Kingdom," Geof Ellis introduces the idea of Providence was more than "prescience." "God's providence is purposeful." it "includes the resolution of the human predicament ... the deliverance of a people created after God's image." This is "providence big scale!" David Dunn, in "Providence and Prayer" points out that when we think about providence, we are "really thinking about God's sovereign control of His creation." Part of this lies in God's interest and concern in hearing and



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answering prayer. He notes that God is “big enough, powerful enough, wise enough, and good enough to handle the myriad of requests from ... millions of people...” Dunn takes us from prayer and answered prayer to consider “what our response to God’s providence should be..” This includes acknowledgment of God and His sovereignty, heartfelt worship, humility and submission. Roy Davison takes us to the time when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. He points out that as God provided the sacrifice that saved Isaac, He also provides the lamb for our sins. “In addition to providing the sacrifice for our sins so we can be saved, the providence of God extends to all aspects of our lives.” George Mansfield considers the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. Perhaps no story better demonstrates God’s Providence at work, bringing together two people “who are both valuable and memorable.” In similar ways, how many times have we seen strangers brought together in seemingly coincidental circumstances with eternal results. Finally, Thayer Salisbury recounts a story shared with him by a former co-worker, Albert Sweet and his encounter with K.C. Moser in a bank in Oklahoma City, following Sweet’s dismissal from a preaching position that resulted from a disagreement with the elders. Sweet became a teller. But, his encounter with brother Moser changed his life. He went on to work for his uncle, R.B. Sweet, noted brotherhood publisher. Salisbury observes, “We make mistakes; we use poor judgment; we make a mess of the situation, but the Lord takes our failure and makes of it something good.”

We thank Paul Birston for his work in planning and bringing this issue together, and these brethren for the contributions. As you read their thoughts and results of their studies, spend some time prayerfully and thankfully thinking about how God’s Providence has blessed your life.

Providence and Prayer

David Dunn

As I was preparing to write this article, my ministry colleague and very close friend, Alex, died unexpectedly. The whole question of providence and prayer took on a more immediate and personal meaning. How was it that only weeks before, we had prayed as a church that Alex would be able to have successful surgery and now, we were preparing for his funeral. What difference did our prayer make? And more generally, why should we pray—does it make any difference to God’s plans?

For us, who believe the Scriptures, the answer has to be yes! Jesus was a man who prayed constantly, even when facing death (Lk.22:39ff.), and he also taught his disciples to pray (Matt.6:8-15). And prayer is a recurring biblical theme as God’s people responded to Him throughout history (just scan through the Psalms). Scripture encourages us to believe that prayer makes a difference—even as we struggle with what God is doing in our lives (1 Sam.1:8-10; Neh.1:4; Isa.38:1-2).

God’s Providential Response to Our Prayers

When we think about providence, we are really thinking about God’s sovereign control of His creation. God governs his creation according to His will (1 Chron.29:11-12 and Psa.115:3). But, although everything in creation happens according to God’s will, not everything is according to His will in the same way. There are certainly things which God has determined will happen, and which He causes to happen. For example, the death of Christ (Acts 2:23). No prayer will change this—not even the prayer of Jesus Himself (Lk.22:41ff.). Then, there are things which God desires to happen, but their happening is conditional on our response. God does not cause them without our cooperation. In this category, we would place God’s

desire to save people (2 Pet.3:9; Matt.23:37-39), and to sanctify them (1 Thess.4:3).

Interestingly, it is this latter type of providential event that Jesus encourages his disciples to pray for in Matthew 6. For example, He desires to forgive our sins, but this is conditional on our response. Since Jesus encourages us to pray about these sorts of events, we know that God will listen to our prayer and may decide to do something to encourage our cooperation. He will not force us to do what is required, but He can certainly work in our lives and surrounding events to help make our compliance more likely (consider Zacchaeus – Lk.19:1ff.). Yet only God knows what, if anything, will make the necessary difference. Only He knows what subtle changes in life’s events would be effective. Only He has the foreknowledge and wisdom of all possible events to make such a decision. And normally, we will not know whether He has acted, or whether things have taken their ‘natural’ course.

However, there is another category of events that falls within the will of God, and it is usually this type that we think of when we pray for God to act. These are not events which God decrees and actively causes, nor are they events which He desires but which require our compliance. Rather, they are events on which God has not spoken at all. In other words, God has not stated any preference. This category covers the multitude of life’s details—from what we eat for breakfast, what career we choose, who will be our life’s partner, what sicknesses we contract, and even how we die. For example, God certainly commands (desires) that we care for our families (1 Tim.5:8), but nowhere does He state any preference for where we earn our money, what we feed them, or what sort of house we should live in. →

Our lives are comprised of numerous details on which God has made no decisive pronouncement. As long as we live within the decreed will of God, and comply with His desires revealed in Scripture, we are free to live our lives as we choose—there is no single will of God for us in these areas—at least not one that He has told us about. However, God still encourages us to come to Him with these matters (1 Pet.5:6-7). He is big enough, powerful enough, wise enough, and good enough to handle the myriad of requests from the millions of people since the world began (He will not be overwhelmed) and to answer them in the way that both fits in with His declared will and is best for us.

In fact, the only criteria for asking is that the prayer be in accordance with His will (1 Jno.5:14). This means first, that what we ask must fit in with God's decreed and desired purposes. And God has clearly revealed these in Scripture. But second, and to the point here, that what we pray for is something that God is willing to grant within His overall control and which He knows is best for us. In this area, we will only know His will after the event, for He has not revealed it to us in his Word.

Paul tells us in Rom.8:28 that whatever happens works out for good for God's people. This is precisely

because God is in control of all that occurs. Even those things which He does not desire—our sin and refusal to comply with His desires—God permits within His larger purpose, and so He is still in control. Nothing lies outside His will in this sense. Therefore, James reminds us that whatever we might plan to do with our lives, even in those things where God has said nothing, we should say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." (Jam.4:13-15) That is, we acknowledge that God may permit it or prevent it, either through natural means or by His direct intervention.

Our Prayerful Response to God's Providence

Returning briefly to Matthew 6, we note that Jesus not only speaks about some of the things we might pray for, He also says something about what our response to God's providence should be. Regardless of His response, we acknowledge that God is sovereign—the kingdom and power is His, to Him alone belongs the glory, forever and ever. Such a response expresses our acknowledgement that God is in control and that He only does what is right and good.

Responding to God's work in our lives should include heartfelt worship of such a God as this. One who is sovereign over all, who is all knowing and powerful to effect His

will, even in the midst of creation's rebellion; who is all wise and good, so that He effects what is best for his creation, and particularly for His people. We should respond in humility, acknowledging that we do not know or understand everything, and that God's answer is always the best. We should respond with submission—gladly accepting God's intervention in our lives to answer our prayers as we have asked, or to decline to intervene and not grant what we desire. We submit to God's unerring wisdom and love.

As so, to Alex. His death was a shock—to his family, and to our little assembly. We believe that God could have allowed him time to have the operation, and he would still be with us to help us in our service to God for years to come. Surely that would have been better. He would have been here to continue being a husband and father—to share many more years doing what only he could do. We think this should have been God's response to our church prayer. But God thought otherwise. And in failing to do what we asked, in deciding not to prevent his passing, we also believe (although we don't yet understand how) that God did what was best for us.

Therefore, we conclude with Paul: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counsellor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?' For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Rom.11:33-36).

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“The LORD Will Provide” (GENESIS 22:14)

Roy Davison

“**T**hen Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided’” (Genesis 22:13, 14).

This was after Abraham had been willing to obey God’s command to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. He was willing to do this because He completely trusted God’s promise that Isaac would be the father of his posterity (Genesis 17:21).

This is explained in the New Testament: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense” (Hebrews 11:17-19).

In this faith, Abraham told his servants, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you” (Genesis 22:5). Although he fully intended to obey God’s command, he was confident that both he and Isaac would return.

In this faith, when Isaac asked him, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” he replied, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:7, 8).

According to the faith of Abraham, God has indeed provided the Lamb for an offering. Like Abraham, we can trust the providence of God. Abraham’s offer of his son prefigured the giving of God’s Son as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Isaac carried the wood on his shoulder that would be used for him being sacrificed. Jesus

bore the cross on His shoulder upon which He would be nailed.

In addition to providing the sacrifice for our sins so we can be saved, the providence of God extends to all aspects of our lives, “for in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

As Elihu states: “If He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust” (Job 34:14, 15).

...God guides the affairs of this world in such a way that good will prevail.

How sad that so many people place their trust in the shifting sands of humanistic philosophy rather than in the word of God. They believe life exists by the providence of mindless materialistic evolution, rather than by the providence of God who in six days “made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Exodus 20:11).

Such people have “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25).

God is displeased when men, whom He made in His own spiritual image, are ungrateful and deny His providence: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Romans 1:18-21).

If God withdrew His Spirit and His breath, life on earth would cease. God did not create the universe like a wound-up clock that now runs by itself. The Son of God, through whom the worlds were made, upholds “all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:1-3).

All good that we enjoy is by the providence of God: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17).

Although God has given man a choice between good and evil, and although all men choose to sin, God guides the affairs of this world in such a way that good will prevail. He has promised “that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

As Joseph told his brothers, who had sold him into Egyptian slavery: “As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:20).

God’s use of their evil action to bring about good does not relieve them of responsibility for their choice.

They requested forgiveness from Joseph: “Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father” (Genesis 50:17). Joseph was willing to forgive and to leave their final judgment in the hands of God: “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?” ... “Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones” (Genesis 50:19, 21). “And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”

This is an example of the providence of God in spite of evil. The very one the evil brothers rejected and sold into slavery, was used by God to provide for them and their children. This prefigures God’s provision of salvation through Christ. →

After saving us, God also helps us to avoid evil and walk in righteousness: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God, in His mercy, provides us with all we need to be saved: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:2-4).

God’s providence does not mean there is nothing for us to do. Peter continues: “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to

your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins” (2 Peter 1:5-9).

God provides all we need to be saved. It will never be God’s fault that anyone is lost. But notice the word “if,” “if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful.”

Our calling and election leads to ultimate salvation only if we make use of the spiritual resources God provides. Peter continues with this conclusion: “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10, 11). Notice the word “if” again, “if you do these things you will never stumble.”

Who controls your life? “A man’s heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps” (Proverbs 16:9). If things do not work out exactly as you planned, do not worry. God knows what He is doing.

Go ahead and make your plans, but keep in mind that God may have something completely different in store for you. “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that’” (James 4:13-15).

Like Abraham, let us fully trust in the providence of God. “In the Mount

of the LORD it shall be provided” (Genesis 22:14).

Prophetically, the Mount of the Lord represents the church of Christ. Isaiah said of the Messianic reign:

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days

That the mountain of the LORD’s house

Shall be established on the top of the mountains,

And shall be exalted above the hills;

And all nations shall flow to it.

Many people shall come and say,

‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

To the house of the God of Jacob;

He will teach us His ways,

And we shall walk in His paths.’

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,

And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”

(Isaiah 2:2, 3 // Micah 4:1).

This was fulfilled in the first century when the church was established and the gospel went forth from Jerusalem into the whole world.

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Hebrews 12:22, 23).

In the church of Christ we are provided with all we need to be saved, and God has promised that if we seek His kingdom and His righteousness first in our lives, He will provide for all our daily needs as well (Matthew 6:33).

“The LORD will provide” (Genesis 22:14).

Roy Davison
Alken, Belgium.

<http://www.oldpaths.com/RD>

Pictures & Reports

We are always looking for items concerning outreach and service activities of congregations across Canada. Pictures are worth a thousand words, they say, and we like to have pictures we can publish on mission outreach and service projects in evangelism, teaching and doing service. These may be of work done in Canada or by Canadian congregational groups who travel and serve outside of Canada. Good quality digital photographs allow us to see, be encouraged by and praise God for these activities of our fellow Christians. We look forward to being able to share these “good news reports” with readers of the Gospel Herald.

— The editors

The Providence of God Seen

as Seen in Philip the Evangelist and the Ethiopian Man

George Mansfield

This short contribution regarding the providence of God will focus on the amazing good news event we read about in the Acts 8:26 to the end.

First, though, allow me to say what comes to my mind when we think of God's providence. It is God's superintendence in people and events that brings a favourable end. It is to be seen apart from the miraculous. To help clarify, think of the miracle at the Red Sea and the ensuing wilderness wanderings through which God brought into being a nation, the nation of Israel. That was miraculous. A difference can be seen in the amazing, seemingly coincidental, events in the life of Joseph.

Each of the above is God at work; supervising, overseeing and bringing to fruition what He desires and plans, but the first is miraculous and the second is providential.

An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, an evangelist for Jesus: *"Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."* (This is the desert road.) So he got up and went. There was an Ethiopian man, a eunuch and high official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to worship in Jerusalem and was sitting in his chariot on his way home, reading the prophet Isaiah aloud. – Acts 8:26-28 (Christian Standard Bible).

After the success of Philip's ministry in Samaria, God had another important job for him. Philip had preached to crowds in Samaria, but now God sent him to concentrate on one man. He was a eunuch from Ethiopia, and as Luke says, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. Candace was the dynastic name of the queens of Ethiopia,

like *Pharaoh* was the dynastic name, or title, of the kings of Egypt, and *Caesar* was the same in Rome. Eunuchs were familiar figures in the royal courts of ancient cultures. They were considered loyal, safe, and disposable. Though they were servants or slaves, many rose to positions of high authority, as this man did. He was a proselyte to Judaism who had traveled 1500 miles from his home in Ethiopia via a chariot to worship at the temple, even though eunuchs, and anyone who had undergone genital mutilation, were barred from full participation in Israel's worship

Jews of that time thought that the suffering servant either represented Israel... or...Isaiah himself.

(Deut. 23:1). Ironic in a culture that required circumcision!

This eunuch was a man of contradictions. He had wealth and power, but was a slave with no rights. He believed in the God of Israel so much that he traveled a great distance to worship at his temple, but was denied full participation because of his physical disability. But after his encounter with Philip and with Jesus, he would experience the freedom and inclusion that he had never known before. As he traveled along the road in his chariot, he read aloud from the Book of Isaiah. It was common to read aloud in ancient cultures, maybe to show that you really could read in a world where most were illiterate. The fact that he had his own scroll of Isaiah shows how rich he was. Books at that time were copied by hand, and very expensive.

In our Bibles we find, The Spirit told Philip, *"Go to that chariot and stay near it."*

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. *"Do you understand*

what you are reading?" Philip asked. *"How can I,"* he said, *"unless someone explains it to me?"* So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

Now the Scripture passage he was reading was this (found in Isaiah 53):

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb is silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who will describe his generation? For his life is taken from the earth.

His reading of this famous and fabulous Scripture left him in awe but wondering *"to whom is this referring?"* So, of necessity, he asks the evangelist to jump into the chariot and help him interpret the words.

Twice in this story, God tells Philip to go somewhere, and Philip goes. If we want to be used by God, we have to go where he tells us to go. If you doubt that God's timing is perfect, consider the passage from Isaiah that the eunuch *"happened"* to be reading when Philip was within earshot. He might have been reading prophecies against Assyria or Babylon (Isaiah 10, 13), or passages regarding the conquering Davidic Messiah in Isaiah 11, but in God's providence, he was reading the Suffering Servant passage from Isaiah 53. It presents the perfect picture of how Jesus had suffered and died not long before in spite of the fact that the original came from the mind of God hundreds of years earlier. This provided the perfect opportunity for Philip to tell him about Jesus.

The eunuch said to Philip, *"I ask you, who is the prophet saying this about—himself or someone else?"* Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning with that Scripture. →

Philip's question to the eunuch, "Do you understand what you are reading?", is exactly the right question. Jews of that time thought that the suffering servant either represented Israel, who had suffered for many years in wars, exile, and persecution, or that he represented Isaiah himself. They didn't want to think that the suffering servant could represent the Messiah. They wanted to think of the Messiah as a conquering king. That's why the eunuch asked the question he asked, "who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" I can just see Philip, in his common clothes, sporting his dust covered feet, sitting in this fancy chariot next to a rich foreign official in fine robes, starting at the beginning of Isaiah 53 and showing how each sentence referred to the events of the last Passover in Jerusalem, and the suffering and death of Jesus. When God told Philip to go, he went, and he arrived at the exact right time to share the gospel with the one God sent him to. If Philip had delayed or argued with God, this meeting would never have happened, or he would have caught up with the chariot at the wrong time. When God tells you to go somewhere or do something, don't delay or argue. Just do it. That is the right time.

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip

baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

I believe we have every right to apply the "necessary inference" rule at this juncture. Philip "preached Christ" to him, then the Ethiopian man asked a question about his need or worthiness to be baptized. It seems that we are correct in assuming that in the preaching of the gospel, there should always be an opportunity, and perhaps encouragement to faith, repentance and baptism included.

At some point in this textual study that led to a real and vibrant faith, Phillip showed his inquirer the direct connection between the cross event and the baptism event. The cross-event captures the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and the baptism-event includes hearing and believing the gospel, then the subject must repent of past sins and be immersed in water in order to be saved.

Philip didn't have to persuade this man about this need. The Ethiopian Eunuch was the one who asked Philip, and that indicated he saw the likeness between the cross-event and the baptism-event. All this by possessing a spiritual yearning, a desire to make sacrifices to know

what God's word says, a preacher nudged by God to explain more fully what the Old Testament prophet was really saying and a willing spirit to accept what he probably had never heard of before: immersion in water in order to have Jesus as his Lord.

Think very carefully and prayerfully brothers and sisters. Do you make the sacrifices and take the time to find out what God wants for you from a book you are somewhat familiar with? Recall, "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." -Matthew 5:6. That is the promise of Jesus, but do not remove it from it's setting.

In the last two verses of this account we hear [that] Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and [Philip] baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer but went on his way rejoicing. Philip appeared in Azotus, and he was traveling and preaching the gospel in all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

The providence of God brought together two people who are both valuable and memorable. Philip, used by God, shone brightly in doing his job for his Heavenly Father, and he "appeared in Azotos; and continued to preach the gospel in all the towns in the vicinity including Caesarea." What a glorious career!

The Ethiopian convert "went on his way rejoicing" and Philip never saw him again. However, it is quite possible that this conversion might have been the spark that lit the fire that eventually turned into the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

This Ethiopian Orthodox is the oldest continuously organized denomination in Christianity, predating the Greek and Roman Churches. Who on earth knows?

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A Sweet Story of God's Sovereignty

Thayer Salisbury

In July of 1982 I finished all the course work for my MA in biblical and related studies. I would not actually receive the diploma until 1983, but I was, essentially, a "Master of Arts." Armed with my degree I, of course, had no difficulty landing a job as a janitor at a school in Oklahoma City.

The plan was for us to go to Brazil as missionaries. But first we needed a sponsoring congregation, and we needed to get to know that congregation. The church in Bethany, Oklahoma was to be our sponsor, so we wanted to live in that area, and worship with that congregation, for a couple of years before heading to Brazil.

While I earned most of my income from janitorial work, I did teach classes and preach occasionally. The church had two fully supported workers.

Albert Sweet had been with the congregation for 13 years. He was transitioning into retirement. Ron Bell was transitioning from youth ministry into full-time preaching. I was getting to know the congregation while making preparations to go to Brazil. (By the way, we never did get to Brazil. But that is another story.)

Albert, Ron and I shared the preaching from late in 1982 until the middle of 1983. Each of us would preach about three sermons per month.

One Sunday evening the elders asked that I stay and meet with them. I do not remember the topic under discussion in that meeting, but I think it may have been some minor detail about the scheduling of the preaching. My wife wanted to get the children to bed, so she went on home. Albert Sweet (who was an elder as well as one of the preachers) promised to give me a lift home.

As Albert drove me home, he began to reminisce about his years in the ministry. He told me that his first

work was in a small town in western Oklahoma. If he told me the name of the town, I have forgotten it.

World War Two was winding toward its close as Albert carried on this work. Although the town was small, and the congregation was not large, they were unusually well off. Several of the members had oil on their land. The war had raised the demand for oil, as well as the demand for what their farms produced. The "Dust Bowl" era was over. Prosperity had come.

Early in 1945, with the outcome of the war all but certain, Otis Gatewood began to make plans to move to

He who could make something good out of the execution of an innocent man by crucifixion, can make something good of our lives, and even of our mistakes.

Germany to help the suffering masses in the defeated country. News of brother Gatewood's plans reached the little church in Oklahoma. A sister in the congregation, who was a nurse, made plans to accompany the Gatewoods and join in the work. She appealed to the elders for assistance, but was flatly refused.

Young Albert Sweet lost his temper. He told two of the elders (each of whom Albert believed to be millionaires) that at their deaths they would be going straight to hell. Not surprisingly, they replied that Albert's services were no longer required, and he was to vacate the parsonage as soon as possible.

Albert, discouraged, defeated, and disillusioned, moved to Oklahoma City, and took a job as a teller in a bank.

Not long after this, K.C. Moser came into the bank to cash a check. Moser would not have been an old man at this time (only about 52), but he told Albert that he did not see well enough to drive at night. He asked

Albert to drive him to a gospel meeting in Chandler, Oklahoma. Albert agreed. Naturally, Albert also went in and participated in the services at Chandler.

"As I listened to brother Moser preach," Albert said, "he kept talking about something called 'grace.' It seemed like a new doctrine to me. I did not know about grace. That meeting changed my life."

We arrived at my home as Albert finished his story. I said, "Brother Sweet, would you be willing to preach a dialogue sermon with me some time." Albert replied, "I would be delighted to preach a dialogue sermon with you. But, by the way, what is a dialogue sermon?" I explained that a dialogue sermon is a sermon where two preachers—who are in agreement on the topic, but who see it

from different points of view—discuss a biblical topic while the congregation listens.

We set a meeting for a couple of days later to plan the dialogue. At this meeting we agreed on a topic "The Providence of God", and agreed on a couple of basic ground rules. I would bring my examples and texts from the Old Testament while Albert would bring his from the New Testament. For me, that meant that I would use the Joseph story and possibly the books of Esther or Ruth. Albert planned to concentrate on Romans chapter 8, and make some reference to the book of Philemon.

A month later, we were ready. When the congregation gathered on Sunday evening, there were two lecterns on the platform. When the time came for the sermon, two preachers stood before them. I began by explaining that this was a dialogue, not a debate. I told them that Albert and I were in agreement on the subject, but that we viewed it from different angles. For me, at 25 years of age, belief in the providence of God was →

a doctrine, a theory. But for Albert, at 65 years of age, it was something more than that.

Albert then began with a brief exposition of some verses in Romans 8. I followed with a retelling of the story of Joseph. I then passed it back to Albert who talked about Philemon. My next section was on Esther, I believe, and then I asked Albert, "Brother Sweet, why not give the congregation an example from your own life."

Albert told the story. He was honest about himself. As a young preacher, he had been a legalist, unaware of the grace of God. He lost his temper with some men who seemed to lack faith and to be stingy. He lost his job, his hope, his ministry. God had not caused those men to be stingy. God had not caused Albert to lose his temper. But God had used their stinginess, and Albert's temper, to put Albert in a bank, where K.C. Moser would ask for his help, which would bring Albert under an influence that

would change his understanding of God forever.

The young legalist would go on to work for his uncle and his brother. In the 1960s Albert was the editor of the best-selling Bible class material in our brotherhood. The Sweet material was far from perfect, of course, but what might it have been if these events had not occurred?

The Lord did not cause Albert's anger or the jealousy of Joseph's brothers, but he used both for good. The Lord did not tell Elimelech and Naomi to flee to Moab, but he used their choice for good. The Lord did not force Philemon to run from his master, but he used that flight to help Philemon know his real master.

We could go on and on, using examples from the Bible and from our own lives. We make mistakes; we use poor judgment; we make a mess of the situation. But the Lord takes our failure and makes of it something good.

Tell These Stories!

Our youth are frightened and fearful. The world seems to be out of control. Even those who want to honor the Lord often make foolish mistakes in his name. At 25 years of age, I needed Albert's story, Joseph's story, Ruth's story, Esther's story, Philemon's story. Today, our youth need all those Bible stories and a few of our personal stories as well. They need to know that what the Lord did in Genesis, he was still doing in Moab during the era of the Judges, in Persia during the reign of Ahasuerus, in Asia Minor in the first century, and in Oklahoma during the chaos of World War Two. They need to know that he is still active behind the scenes today.

The sweet story of God's sovereignty is not over. He who could make something good out of the execution of an innocent man by crucifixion, can make something good of our lives, and even of our mistakes.

Toledo, Ohio

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Giving: What's In It For Me?

Recently, I read an article in a magazine designed for “older folks”, entitled “Giving is Good for You”. The author defined giving as the donating of time or money to a worthy cause. Based on research studies, the article stated that giving benefited the giver in the following ways.

1. It makes you feel good. Spending time or money on others is more likely to lift your spirits than is treating yourself to something special. The amount of money does not matter. The feeling lasts longer if practiced regularly. “Generally speaking, generosity predicts higher well-being for donors.”
2. It is good for your health. Older adults who give of their time may delay age-related ills. Studies have shown strong evidence that volunteers had decreased symptoms of depression, fewer functional limitations and lived longer than non-volunteers. Volunteering may also be associated with cognitive gains.
And if you are donating money, a US study found that even after controlling for factors such as income, physical activity and marital status, generosity was linked with lower blood pressure. “To our surprise, this change was similar in magnitude to what is typically observed when people start engaging in aerobic exercise.”
3. It provides a sense of purpose which contributes to ones mental and physical health. The feeling that you have made a difference amplifies the joy derived from giving.
4. It sets an example for others. Generosity is contagious. “Other

research suggests that volunteering by older adults increases altruistic attitudes in younger people.”¹

Good works are not meritorious. They do not earn us a place in heaven. But they do pay dividends. Besides those things mentioned in the magazine article, Scripture tells us this. “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” – Luke 6:38 (NIV 1984).

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” – 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NIV 1984).

Jesus said it very simply. “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35a). However, a desire to gain blessings for oneself should not be the motivation for doing good.

James and John told us that our faith and love of God are revealed through our good deeds. “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” – James 2:15-17 (ESV).

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need

but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” – 1 John 3:17, 18 (NIV 1984).

Acts 10:38 tells us, “And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him” (NLT). “Because giving was the essence of the Saviour’s life, it is a holy habit to be cultivated by everyone who wears His name.”²

“He [Christ] gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds” – Titus 2:14 (NLT).

Giving is expected of Jesus’ followers. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” – Ephesians 2:10 (NIV 1984).

“And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful” – Titus 3:14 (ESV).

“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work” – Titus 3:1 (ESV).

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” – Galatians 6:10 (ESV).

Our good deeds bring glory to God and please Him. “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God” – Proverbs 14:31 (NIV 1984).

“Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evil doers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” – 1 Peter 2:12 (ESV).

“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such

sacrifices God is pleased” – Hebrews 13:16 (NIV 1984).

Giving is an integral part of encouragement. “The crowning achievement of encouragement is learning to give yourself away in small deeds of kindness.”³ “**And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded**” – Matthew 10:42 (NLT). “Money and material possessions are often the least meaningful gifts. What people want and need is the time and attention of someone who cares for them.”⁴

In his book, *The Barnabas Factor*, Aubrey Johnson offers these ten guidelines for giving.

1. *Value yourself.* Everyone has something worthwhile to give, and you are no exception. Accentuate your unique skills and talents.
2. *Don't barter.* Nothing is more repugnant than a gift with strings attached. Always give expecting nothing in return.

3. *Start early.* Get started the moment your feet hit the floor. Don't procrastinate or the day and its opportunities will slip by you.
4. *Begin at home.* Don't treat strangers better than your own family. Make home your [giving] laboratory and experiment freely.
5. *Act quickly.* When a warm-hearted impulse hits you, act on it right then. Otherwise it will dissipate and a wondrous moment will be lost forever.
6. *Be alert.* Opportunities to encourage [through giving] are nearly always present to the discerning eye. See with your heart and they will materialize around you.
7. *Enjoy giving.* Encouraging [through giving] is one of life's greatest but most underappreciated pleasures. Savour the moment as God's gift to you.

8. *Redeem time.* Too many precious minutes are wasted that could be put to good use. Take advantage of waiting rooms and long lines. (also commutes, etc.)
9. *Respect everyone.* Above everything else on earth, prize people, and treat the very least with the same dignity you would afford Jesus.
10. *Think small.* Quit waiting to perform headline-grabbing heroics. Be practical, not pretentious. Seize the small!⁵

Since our loving Father has lavished His gifts so richly upon us, how can we not gladly share those gifts with others?

¹ *Good Times Magazine*, November 2017, “Giving Is Good for You”, pp 23-29

² *The Barnabas Factor* by Aubrey Johnson, Gospel Advocate Co., 2004, p 99.

³ *Ibid.* p 96.

⁴ *Ibid.* p 99.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp 102, 103.

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Deadly Spiritual Deceptions

(ONE IN A SERIES OF SIX)

Thayer Salisbury

“Love Jesus, Not the Church”

It is not uncommon to meet people who claim to have a good relationship with Christ, but who are not active in any church. These people live out the theory, “We can love Jesus without caring much about the church.” These people want to say “yes” to Jesus but “no” to the church.

Before proceeding to criticize this position, let’s acknowledge the situation that has led people to this point. There have been churches that are abusive, unscrupulous and unscriptural. There are people who have been hurt by churches like that. We have no desire to defend such churches.

Of course, we might point out that every good thing has been counterfeited or adulterated. Money is often counterfeited. Do we therefore quit using money? There have been farmers and shopkeepers who adulterate food. Do we quit eating? No, in these cases we look for genuine money; we seek a better source for our food; or we may even go back to the basics and grow our own. So it should be if the church we have known is not striving to be what it should be.

But in responding to the notion that we can love and serve Jesus without being a part of the church, let us note the following five truths.

Founded by Jesus

The church was founded by Jesus. He said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18, ESV). Since Jesus founded the church, dare we treat it as optional or unimportant?

Jesus Died for the Church

It was the church for which Jesus died. The Apostle Paul points this out in speaking to the elders of the Ephesian church. He said, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all

the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28, ESV).

Can we imagine someone meeting Jesus and saying, “Jesus, you are a real likeable guy. I really think highly of you. But that stupid church, that group of people you died for, I never had any use for them.”

I do not know why Jesus thought it worthwhile to die for a sorry bunch of sinners like us, but I cannot see how anyone who respects him could think the church not worthy of our efforts. As flawed as the church may be, if it was worth his blood to purchase it, it is worth our effort to support and maintain it.

The Body of Jesus

The church is the body of Jesus. It is called that repeatedly. For example, in Ephesians 1:22-23 we read, “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all”. In Ephesians 5:29-30 we read, “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.”

Let us note that these texts not only call the church his body, but clearly indicate that it is very special to him and in his plan. The first of those texts (1:22-23) also says that his fullness is revealed in the church. The person who tries to love Jesus while bypassing the church will miss the fullness of Jesus.

Makes Known God’s Wisdom

We should also note that it is through the church that God’s wisdom is made known. Here a slightly longer quote is needed. “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the

Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 3:8-10, ESV).

Should we not want to be a part of that body of people through whom God is making his wisdom known?

We cannot excuse ourselves by saying, “O, but the church is so flawed.” Often its very flaws are a means by which God makes his greatness to be seen. The flaws of its servants ensure that the power will be seen to be of God (see Eph 5:25-27 & 2 Cor 4:5-7). As the late Raymond Kelcy used to say, “One of the proofs of the divine origin of the church is the preaching it has endured.”

The Church, His Bride

The church is the “bride” of Christ. She is not perfect, but he is perfecting her. He loves her, as a man ought to love his wife, and ought to love himself (Ephesians 5:25-32). Dare we despise what our Lord so loves?

We cannot seriously claim to have a good relationship with someone if we do not like his wife, ignore his wisdom, show no regard for his body, dislike the institution he founded and for which he died. Of course every church is imperfect—so is every bank, every supermarket, every school—everything that involves humans is imperfect. But God has chosen to work with imperfect people by means of the imperfect institution called the church. He has chosen to perfect us by calling us together and working with us in this way.

To say that we do not need the church is to blaspheme God. It is to claim that we are wiser than he, that our ways are better than his.

Toledo, Ohio

NEWS

-EAST-

by Harold Bruggen
Church of Christ, Box 416
Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0
Email: Harold Bruggen at
hbruggen@gmail.com

NEW YORK

Niagara Falls, NY – LaSalle: On October 15 we celebrated the 60th anniversary for Glen & Edna Mueller. On November 19, after the morning worship service, we delivered Thanksgiving Baskets to those in need.

ONTARIO

Fenwick: From November 5 through November 8, we enjoyed hearing Peter Morphy present lessons from Proverbs. Visitors came each night which was a great encouragement to us. Average attendance was 35. On October 31, we were able to hand out 47 goodie bags with invitations to worship enclosed. The Young Disciples Club continues to meet each month.

Meaford: The fall is a busy time for everyone as kids get back to school and we all prepare for the coming cold weather. It's been busy in Meaford as well. We have had some fun and exciting things happening. In October Dave and Barb Ellis hosted a highly successfully fish fry to benefit Cuba. Later in the month we were fortunate to have Peter Morphy come and share a series of lessons with us that focused on how we relate to the world and how we can reach them more effectively. It was a great series and the ideas presented have been helpful to everyone who attended. We have also recently reached our goal of 3500lb of food donated to the local food bank and hope to add a good amount more to that number before year end. With Christmas approaching we have a special dinner for our seniors coming November 29th and a few days later we will be enjoying and participating in the Meaford Santa Clause parade. We are looking forward to a cold but productive winter and to a new year full of opportunity to serve God.

Toronto (Bayview Ave): Bayview has been blessed with fine teaching and preaching on Sundays. In Bible class Jean Volcy is continuing his study of Isaiah two weeks per month, while David Knutson is furthering the examination of world views, based on James Syres' book, The Universe Next Door, once a month. Chad

Comfort has joined us one Sunday per month and is presenting thoughts on how to be a great Christian, with prayer the most recent emphasis. The congregation and many guests enjoyed a wonderful potluck luncheon after service on the fifth Sunday in October.

Toronto (Strathmore Blvd): On November 11, the ladies at Strathmore held their 7th Annual Ladies Retreat. The main theme this year was Transformation. There were three speakers including Debra Hibbard who spoke on "The Transformed Life", Pauline Williams, "Transformed Through Prayer" and Vivien Braga, "Transformed By The Word." Approximately 69 ladies attended the event and feedback was quite positive reflecting it being an uplifting and encouraging day. Of note, Strathmore Blvd. has officially designated their building as a fragrance-free facility. The chemicals used in scented products can make some people sick, especially those with fragrance sensitivities, asthma, allergies and other medical conditions. The congregation rejoices with Lurlene Thompson who was baptized on November 8, 2017. Lurlene had been reflecting on her previous baptism realizing that she at that time didn't fully understand baptism was for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, she wanted to ensure her obedience to the gospel by submitting to New Testament baptism. We pray God blesses Lurlene richly as she serves and honours Almighty God. With the recent number of baptisms, a New Converts Course series has been developed to teach these new babes in Christ. One Sunday per month has been set aside to review course material completed each month and to answer any questions from that material. Brother Williams Diogu (one of the Nigerian students) is spearheading this effort. The Key To The Kingdom crew completed their "on the road" filming for the year in September at Owen Sound, Collingwood and Meaford and in November at Barrie and Pine Orchard. We appreciate these congregations making their building available for us and look forward in the Spring and summer visiting other congregations in Ontario.

Waterloo: On October 22 we will be took up a special collection of \$1,264 for the Irish Mission to help support David and Sally Dunn in their ministry work in Newtonards. Our young adult's ministry hosted an event in Waterloo on Oct 28-29. The purpose of the ministry "Equipped 2 Impact" was to develop practical ministry skills. The weekend was focused on going out into our surrounding community, serving others, and sharing the faith.

Windsor – West Side: An idea was presented about having a trunk or treat here at the building on Halloween. It was our first ever attempt at this. It was a fun way to invite neighborhood kids to just come and see us. Hopefully we can continue to make ways to be present in the lives of the people around our community and may be able to reach some who are looking for God in their lives.

NEWS

-WEST-



by Marion Waugh
#7, 420 Hunters Green
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Email: waughr1@shaw.ca

(BC news supplied by Barbara Lewis)

ALBERTA

Edmonton: Nicolas Alang & Helen Mbong, Magnus Alang & Elizabeth Alang, Gary & Diane Friesen, Harry Jacques, Bryce Johnson and Launa Johnson have all made it known they wish to be part of our congregation. Our fall fellowship was a great success. Keith Lancaster led 5 praise & harmony workshops. In these workshops we learned some singing tips and some new songs. Bruce Boland of Niagara Falls taught a series of lessons: I stand in awe of the Creator; I stand in awe of the Redeemer; I stand in awe of the Word and I stand in awe of the Indweller.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burnaby: Our new classes for children have started with the O.T. as it looks forward with special emphasis on the promise of a new Saviour who will come. The next half will be studies in the N. T. revealing how the Saviour they've been looking forward to has come. Our adult class is following the same pattern of study to cover the purpose of God in giving the world both the history of the Jews as well as the foundation and origin of His church today.

Delta: We recently received a report and personal letter from Mila & Sergei Chubenko, who have been working with the UBI in Kiev, Ukraine. We have been supporting this couple since they were introduced to us by Jay Don Rogers when they arrived home last summer. They felt this was a special couple who were students, but also were exceptionally helpful →

in the UBI work going on in Donetsk. The Rogers wanted to keep them working at the school during the summer, but they would need support. Delta Church decided we could help by providing for them through the summer and continue it through the remainder of the year, when the commitment will be re-evaluated.

Oakridge: Marilyn Jacobs hosted an afternoon birthday party on Nov. 25 in celebration of her mother's reaching her 90th birthday. Betty Jacobs was the honoree greeting well-wishers during the afternoon at the Oakridge building. The auditorium was also the scene of the wedding vows made by Samantha Gray and Alan Hidalgo on Oct. 14. The bride and groom provided a luncheon for the congregation following worship service the next day.

Salmon Arm: We are gearing up for fall studies on several important subjects. One is concerning why things happen badly when we have a good God, (which is not the title) and one concerning ways and means to present that there is a God and that we can share with conviction that He exists. A new Sunday evening study using a traveler's journey book called "Acts of God" with a DVD and written by Ross Brodfueher, is being led by Bob Russell as our discussion leader. We are encouraging people we contact through the week to take advantage of this opportunity.

Surrey: Our responder to the requests for Bible correspondence courses which both the church here and the TV program's "Key to the Kingdom", Joanne Simonsen, keeps an accurate record of the number for any given year. As of the first ten months of this year, there is quite an increase, as she has taken care of 172 new requests. She recently received one from a woman asking for two teen lessons. Since the surname was different from the girls' names given, Joann assumed it probably came from their grandmother who soon advised her that the girls are anxiously awaiting the lessons which had not yet arrived. When she explained to her that they are being mailed from Western Canada, the grandmother responded that the girls are even more excited that they are coming from Canada! Another interesting recent request was from a man incarcerated in a Regina prison who writes, "I would like to know if there are any Bible studies or material you can send me. I read daily and assist in a Bible group here. I have very limited resources here to help in my spiritual journey. Thank you". From a student in Malawi who has been science topics in relation to Bible lessons. They are good

lessons and educative. Thanks to all those taking their time to compile these lessons. May God bless you all. Keep on teaching us and others." Joann answers all of these requests as quickly as possible. A recent baptism was performed at the request of one of our members who questioned her earlier decision.

MANITOBA

Winnipeg: The November Kid's Club made greeting cards to give out for Christmas and other occasions. Rusty Campbell who ministers in Ecuador, was guest speaker, October 29. Later he led a discussion on his sermon and answered questions on his work in Ecuador. We send support for him through the Manson congregation. We took up a special collection for David Dunn who is ministering in Ireland.

SASKATCHEWAN

Weyburn: A come and go tea party was held for Roland Olson's 85th birthday. One hundred eight pairs of mittens have been collected so far for the Gentle Road church in Regina.

MISSION NEWS

*Barbara Lewis
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e-mail: ray-bjl@comcast.net*



WORLD BIBLE SCHOOL: Even though the year 2017 is almost over, some of the unexpected accomplishments by the body of Christ worldwide have already been shown to be amazingly helpful in increasing the fold of God, which is the church named for His son, the Christ. Bigger than the fireworks that briefly light up the sky as we usher in another year of opportunities to invite people to share our faith was the completion this year of another helpful tool God has given us to increase our ability to share His Word. The World Bible School has proved ever since it was introduced in the 1960's (?) that when the N. T. writer said that His Word which has been preserved would draw people into his Kingdom, it has taught people about His love and pointed the way to a happy life. In the Greek N.T. the word for "power" is "dunimas", which is the origin of our word "dynamite". The World Bible School's mission has simply been to give people a

three-word motto: "You- Sharing-Jesus", which connects each of us to those looking for a way to God and His promises. Each year the number of people subscribing to finding those looking for the Bible increases and more learn how it can affect their lives. 2017 has seen the finish and application of one of the most effective helps to keep our souls in contact with God and his people. Already, there has been a constant demand for this new WBS Study edition English Standard Version of the Bible which offers added notes to serve as helpful guides to aid both students and teachers. It also serves as an introduction to all of the WBS courses that are offered and gives a chronological reading of the scripture.

BURMA (Myanmar): For the past eight years, Partners in Progress has been working with people in the Delta region of Myanmar in an effort the share the gospel with this Buddhist community. Nine thousand people were fed for a year before a devastating cyclone added another 2,000 to that number. The government forbade any type of evangelism, but after a time, those receiving food began to ask questions about where it came from and who these people were. We simply answered their questions, which eventually brought about the baptism of 180 people. Until the last few months, foreigners were forbidden even to visit the delta, but a newly elected government has relaxed many of the restrictions, and Bill and Marie-Claire McDonough were able to visit the several churches for the first time. They met with a large congregation of about 70 people, and were able to visit some of them in their homes, where the people continued to express their interest in studying the Bible and growing in Christ. Still with very little help from the outside, they continue to teach their neighbors and bring them to the Lord. However, with the recent problems Myanmar has had with thousands of Muslim refugees coming from Pakistan, there has been so much turmoil, we have not been able to find out if they are also filtering into the Delta region or not. We ask you to remember these small house churches as you ask that God gives them strength, knowledge and wisdom.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA (Lae): "October saw the total raised towards the new classroom building for the Melanesian Bible College reach nearly K95,000.00 (CN\$37,850.00). There has been a bit of confusion in our reports recently regarding goals and timing, for which I want

to apologize. A slight communication breakdown among really busy people led to an overdue coordination meeting this past week. The outcome is the following: Gilmore, our brother who has designed the building and who works as a contractor, has received a quotation from Atlas Steel, a local company. The cost to purchase the custom cut frame, etc. for the building is currently K130,000.00 (CN\$51,800.00). Another K20,000.00 will be required for the cement pad. This means that we are currently working towards the first stage: K150,000.00 (CN\$59,800.00) to see the building frame completed. The overall goal of K400,000.00 (currently CN\$159,400.00) is still in place, and is required to complete the second stage: the walls, flooring, electrical work, and furnishings (the old desks are termite-ridden) for the new building; maintenance of the remaining classroom building; and new fencing for both the main property and the dormitories, which are located in the settlement behind the school, as all of the fencing is in poor condition, and we have ongoing problems with vandalism and the dorms being broken into when the school season is out.

With the constant increase in prices here (and the falling value of the kina) we are focused on reaching the K130,000.00 mark as quickly as possible in order to purchase the frame lest the cost increases before we have enough funds. Please make sure that the donation is earmarked "MBC Building Project", and include an email or mailing address so that we can thank you and update you on progress made. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me (ruthzimm@gmail.com) or M.B.C. Principal, Jab Mesa, at melanesianbiblecollege@gmail.com. We continue to trust God to supply.

In Canada:

Fenwick church of Christ
765 Welland Ave.,
P.O. Box 416,
Fenwick, ON LOS 1C0

In the U.S.A.:

Highland church of Christ
400 N. Houston Levee Rd.
Cordova, TN 38018
Att: Jackie Meadows

(This plea comes from the newsletter written monthly by Ruth Zimmerman, currently the only person from North America to speak to the needs of the Melanesian Bible School and what it means to future generations of students in the South Pacific.)

OBITUARIES

Baker, Stanley T.

Stan passed away September 21, 2017, after a long battle with cancer. Stan was an active member of the Lord's church wherever he lived, including the Ice Lake Church of Christ, Griersville Church of Christ, Meaford Church of Christ and the Kitchener Church of Christ.

He was predeceased by his loving wife Leona Baker (Cann). Stan will be missed by: Bob Buckton (Connie), Thomas Baker (Helen), Leonard, Darrell Baker (Lori), Rebecca Shortt (Roger), Rosanne Collins (Bruce), and also by twelve grandsons and ten great-grandchildren.

Stan is survived by three sisters, Jean Hastings, Dorothy McKee, Betty Osborne and one brother William (Bill) Baker. Stan was predeceased by a brother Ken Baker and a sister Carol Hansen.

Stan was a good friend, and a mentor to many. His love for the Lord, self-discipline and generous heart served him well.

- submitted by Peter McDonald

Boyce, Aileen Margaret (nee CANNON) 1921 - 2017

Aileen Boyce passed away peacefully at the Meaford Long Term Care Centre on Thursday, October 12, 2017 in her 97th year. Beloved wife of 40 years to Ian Boyce. Dear mother of the late Eric Zimmerman and mother-in-love to Janet Cope. Adored Grandma of Martin Cope. Predeceased by brother Joe Cannon. She will also be greatly missed by many nephews and nieces.

Aileen was born in Toronto where she became a member of the Fern Avenue church of Christ. She traveled extensively and lived for two years in Shanghai before settling down on Wishing Well Farm near Markdale, Ontario, where she was a long time member of the Vandeleur church of Christ. Aileen was inspired by children, babies and dogs and spent time whenever she could be entertaining them. She was known and loved for her wit and her wisdom. She loved classical music and spent many hours listening while gardening but more than anything she had a great love for her Lord and for the church and church family.

Those who knew Aileen well will know that she thought the world of her brother Joe Cannon who spent his life as a missionary, first in Japan and then in Papua New Guinea, and later in life also in the Ukraine. Thus, Aileen was so proud of her son Eric who was engaged to Janet Cope and they had made plans to go and work with uncle Joe in the mission fields in New Guinea. Can you imagine then the devastation she felt when Eric was killed in a tractor accident on the farm before the wedding. Janet decided to go and live out their dream working in the Lord's service in New Guinea on her own. And so Aileen kept in close contact with missionaries who have continued to go to these places from Canada.

A memorial service was well attended Saturday, October 21, 2017, at 1 pm at the Meaford church of Christ, with Vandeleur minister Gordon Dennis and song leader Tim Hotchkiss. Brian Thompson of the Owen Sound church also shared several memories of Aileen and how the Thompson and Cannon and Boyce families had enjoyed close ties of friendship and Christian fellowship →

over many years. Les Cramp of the Collingwood church also shared how Aileen had impacted his life and preaching and led a prayer.

Janet Cope read a letter Robin Cannon had written on behalf of Aileen's nephews and nieces who, because of distance, were not able to attend but loved their Auntie Aileen and had great memories of times past with her. Janet also shared how Aileen had impacted her life for the better. Before her passing Aileen had requested that Beth Hotchkiss and Diann Petch sing together the wonderful hymn, "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind". This too was a special time of worship to our Lord and Father, as well as bringing more memories of Aileen. At the closing of the service Peter McDonald of the Meaford church led a prayer asking for God's blessing upon the food and fellowship we were to partake of as we went downstairs to the fellowship hall.

If desired, memorial donations to Great Lakes Christian High School or Great Lakes Bible College would be appreciated by the family.

– submitted by Gordon Dennis

McDonald, Lloyd J.

After a brief illness, Lloyd passed away on October 25, 2017, in Salt Lake City, Utah, at age 64. Born in Oshawa, On., Lloyd is the youngest son of the late Leslie and Lillian McDonald.

Lloyd had taken a teaching position in Brockton, Montana, at the Fort Peck Indian Reserve. He had a very keen interest in Native peoples and truly enjoyed the challenges of teaching in many different reservations in Northern Ontario and Manitoba over the years. Lloyd had just begun his term in Brockton, when he became very ill, was transferred to Salt Lake

City, and passed away from a very aggressive form of leukaemia.

Lloyd will be missed by his sons Brandon (Colleen) McDonald of Windsor, Dallas (Lisa) McDonald of Alabama, stepchildren, Tom and Lisa Flagg, his grandchildren, Andrew, Grace, and Abby McDonald, his siblings, Dan (Marg) of Mapleton Australia, Nancy (Dave) of Oshawa, Peter (Gayle) of Meaford and Roy (Lucy) of Cathedral City, California along with many nieces and nephews. Lloyd had very special friends, Sue and Ed Phillips of Windsor who will miss him greatly.

Lloyd was predeceased by his wife Geraldine and by his wife Sue (Flagg).

A private family graveside service will take place at Pinegrove Cemetery, Prince Albert, ON.

– submitted by Nancy Jackson

Priestnall, Robert William

Robert (Bob) William Priestnall was born January 16, 1933, in Hamilton, Ontario, and passed away Thursday, November 16, 2017, in Burlington, Ontario. His parents were James and Edna Priestnall, and he had three siblings—Jim, of Burlington, Larry of Alberta, and Diane, who died in California in 2006.

In 1955 Bob married Bernice Harrington, and they recently celebrated their 62nd anniversary. They had two children, Rick, of Stoney Creek, Ontario, and Lisa, of Burlington, Ontario. Bob worked at Shell Oil refinery in Oakville, Ontario for 25 years until it closed, about two years for Great Lakes Christian College as an Admissions Counselor, and 10 years for the Ministry of Environment in Mississauga, Ontario. He had a special love for Great Lakes Christian

College, where he completed Grade 13 as part of its first graduating class in 1953.

Jesus Christ and the church were central to his life. When he was 14, he and his mother began attending the Ivon Avenue Church of Christ in Hamilton and were soon baptized. He continued with this church when it moved to Stoney Creek in 1982, so for 70 years he was part of the same group of Christians. He served many ways during those years, but he especially loved song leading. He first did this when he was 15, and he last did it a year or so ago when he had to be helped to his feet to do it one last time. He also volunteered countless hours looking after the church property, fixing what needed repaired or making sure someone else did it.

Bob and his brother, Jim, cared for their mother for many years, enabling her to stay in her own home until she was 99. Each went to her house three days a week until she moved to a nursing home, where she died in 2013 at age 101. Meanwhile Bernice had serious health problems, and Bob was looking after his mother and his wife in different nursing homes. During this time, he developed Parkinson's disease and his health gradually deteriorated. He went first to a retirement home, and when his health worsened, to Brant Centre, where Bernice already lived.

Personal relationships were very important to Bob, whether at church, at work, or wherever he lived, and he made a host of friends along the way. Many of these friends gathered at his memorial service November 20, 2017, at Smith's Funeral Home in Burlington to celebrate a life well-lived. Interment following the service was at Burlington Memorial Gardens.

– submitted by Edwin Broadus

From the Gospel Herald Foundation...

Edwin Broadus

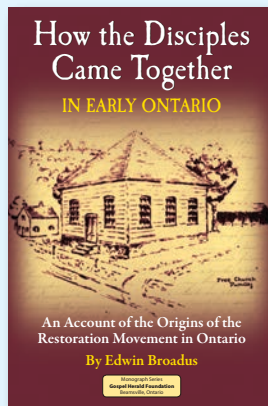
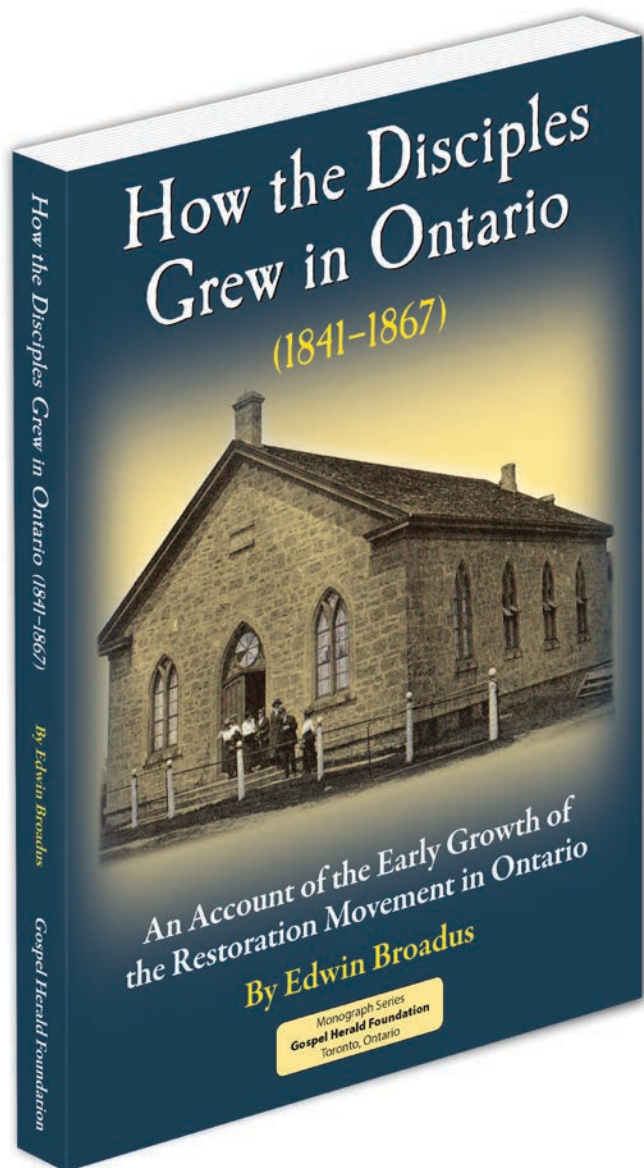
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(1841-1867)

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the Early Growth of the
Restoration Movement
in Ontario

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The Providence of God Seen	D	9

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Salisbury, Thayer

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Thompson, Brian

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