



# The Ryburn Christian Clarion

BIBLICAL STUDIES RESOURCE

*Upholding the Accuracy of the God-Breathed Word*

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The Ryburn Christian Clarion, 420 Ryburn Avenue, Suite C-2, Dayton, Ohio 45405-2552, U. S. A.; (937) 275-3316; (general) [thecclarion@godslivingroom.com](mailto:thecclarion@godslivingroom.com); (submissions) [rcc.rd.keith@gmail.com](mailto:rcc.rd.keith@gmail.com); [www.godslivingroom.com](http://www.godslivingroom.com)

Unless otherwise stated, all passages are quoted from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible. All explanatory remarks by a writer within scripture verses are enclosed in brackets [ ].

## The Blessing Of “QUIET SEAS”

**S**TRESS IS SOMETHING WE hear quite a lot about in our modern society. People everywhere seem to be concerned about avoiding “hassles” and “getting uptight.” The airwaves are replete with products and programs that are supposedly designed to usher in peace of mind, as is the Internet. Some promote transcendental meditation (TM), while others suggest transactual analysis (TA), or self-actualization, implying that peace is arrived at through getting to know your inner self. Then, of course, there are always meditation tapes and their soothing sounds of the natural world, the chanting of mantras, or even the supposed, mellow enchantments of marijuana. Sadly, however, none of these so-called remedies address the real problem, which is mankind’s estrangement from the God of peace.

On the other hand, for those who acknowledge Christ as Lord, there is no estrangement. In truth, according to Romans 5:1, any who believe “...have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...” What a wonderful reality for the child of God, but it doesn’t stop there. The Word also promises that we can have *peace within*, or what some have called “quiet seas.” As a matter of fact, God has  
*continued on next page...*

### INSIDE AT A GLANCE

**HERE WE ARE** with yet another edition of the Clarion, filled with the depth and detail of God’s wonderful Word. Our prayer is that it enhances your spiritual walk and serves to enrich your relationship with our Heavenly Father.

“**THE BLESSING OF ‘QUIET SEAS’**” calls us to remember the sheltering protection that comes from God, Who, by Christ Jesus, has settled every issue that matters. Surely, our hearts can safely rest in His love and strength.

*by Rick Heeter, Editor-in-Chief.....1*

“**GOD’S MATCHLESS WORD**”: Luck, fate, destiny, fortune: the modern understanding of these ideas is not supported by the Scriptures. In addition, the Word of God indicates that there is also “**No Chance!**”

*by Rev. Charlie P. Johnston, Jr. ....3*

“**FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT**”: Here’s something we haven’t done for several years. Our brother, “Hank,” who has lovingly graced our pages in the past, offers up some poetic “**Meditations And Musings**”.

*by Henry S. Altheide.....4*

“**FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT**” examines a timely concern. During the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, we thought it appropriate to explore “**Religious Radicalism Versus True Spiritual Zeal**”.

*by Keith Jamison, Columnist.....5*

“**GOD AND COUNTRY**”: Invigorated by the bold stand of Wycliffe, and a century before the deeds of Luther, “**The Travesty And Triumph Of John Hus**” tells the story of the Bohemian priest who gave his life in defense of the Gospel.

*by Rick Heeter, Editor-in-Chief.....7*

provided, in every age, a measure of peace for all who walk with Him, and seek His face. Let's see what the Old Testament has to say regarding this.

### **Leviticus 26:3 and 6a**

*If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;*

*...I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid:...*

### **Psalms 4:8**

*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.*

### **Proverbs 3:21, 23 and 24, and 26a**

*My son, ...keep sound wisdom and discretion:*

*Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble.*

*When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.*

*For the LORD shall be thy confidence...*

In the Bible, the word “peace” is generally indicative of freedom from social unrest or other public disturbances, including violent hostility. It is also used concerning an absence of mental distraction or disturbance. Whether it is quietness and rest in our physical surroundings or within our minds, peace ushers in a sense of safety and security. As the verses above show, we can have peace “...in the land...” and “...dwell in safety.” Our “...sleep shall be sweet,...” and we shall “...not be afraid....”

It is important to note that the source of this tranquility is God. Also, the quality of the peace we experience is linked to our obedience to His Word. God declared, “...keep my commandments...” and “...sound wisdom and discretion,...” for in doing so “...shalt thou walk in thy way safely....” It is in the *doing* of God's Word that we have real external and internal peace.

### **Isaiah 26:3**

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*

Another way to realize peace in our lives, and nurture “quiet seas” within, is to stay our minds on God and the things of God, like His Word. As we trust God, He will guard our minds with “...perfect peace....” In the Hebrew texts, this expression is literally rendered “peace peace.” The word “peace” is actually doubled to emphasize the quality of the peace God offers His people. It is *perfect* peace.

During His earthly life, and throughout His public ministry, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, certainly must have been the physical embodiment of this peace that is *perfect*. Since He never sinned, we know that He always kept God's commandments and walked in sound wisdom. Additionally, if anyone was able to stay his mind continually upon God, it surely must have been His beloved Son.

Do you remember how, in John 14:27, the Lord Jesus said, “...my peace I give unto you...”? Well, if you couple that with Ephesians 2:14, where Paul notes that “...he [Christ] is our peace,...” an exciting truth unfolds. It is that God's *perfect* peace lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation, when Christ comes to live within us.

### **Colossians 3:15**

*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

As children of God, we have peace *with* God through the accomplished work of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:1) In addition, we have the peace of God *in* us because the Prince of Peace has made His abode within us. (Rom. 8:10a, Gal. 2:20, and Col. 1:27) It only remains then for the believer to “...let the peace of God rule...” in his or her heart. By our own choice, we allow the *perfect* peace within to influence our motives and guide our hearts.

### **Philippians 4:6 and 7**

*Be careful [“anxious”] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known [or “declared”] unto God.*

*And the peace of God, which passeth [“surpasses”] all understanding, shall keep [“guard” or “garrison”] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

In order to live with calm, placid seas on the inside, we must exercise our will. We must live as the Word of God instructs; we must decide to occupy our minds with thoughts of God and the things of God; and we must have a keen awareness of the vast reservoir of *perfect* peace that dwells within us. Also, when we find ourselves anxious or disturbed, it is important that we go to God in prayer without delay.

In verse 6 of Philippians 4, the word “careful” is equal to our modern understanding of the word “anxious.” It indicates “mental distraction,” which, as we have noted earlier, is the absence of peace. In

fact, the phrase, “Be careful for nothing,...” may literally be translated, “Do not be filled with mental distraction regarding anything....” God commands us to avoid all mental distraction and unrest, and to go to Him in prayer, in all things declaring unto Him our specific petitions.

In the King James Version (KJV), the words “nothing” and “every thing,” in Philippians 4:6, stand in stark contrast to one another. There is nothing in this life, “no thing,” that can shake or alter the work of salvation accomplished in those who have made Jesus Christ their Lord. (Rom. 8:31-39) Furthermore, God invites us to come to Him in prayer concerning “every thing.” If we do this, as verse 7 of Philippians 4 states, the peace of God shall “guard” our hearts.

#### **Psalms 107:26-30**

*They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.*

*They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,*

*and are at their wit's end.*

*Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.*

*He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.*

*Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.*

It is not God's will for His people to be tied in knots emotionally. The recurring exhilarating highs and somber lows that so many endure are not for the children of the Almighty. Instead, as a nurturing Father, He seeks to calm the storms of our souls, and takes pleasure in delivering us from our distresses. As we live His Word and set our thoughts upon Him, with His perfect peace, He will guard our hearts and direct us into a sheltering harbor, where the seas are still and ever quiet.\*

-----by Rick Heeter, Editor-in-Chief

## **GOD'S MATCHLESS WORD:**

### ***A Forum For Presenting The Light Of Life***

*(This column features a wide range of subjects from God's Word as they are set forth by a host of preachers and teachers from differing avenues of Christian thought and various areas of Biblical study and concern.)*

## **“ ‘No Chance!’ ”**

*by Rev. Charlie P. Johnston, Jr.*

**[Editor's Note:** *The following article is an adaptation from an excerpt of chapter 9 of the book, No Such Thing As LUCK! A Biblical Perspective, by Rev. Charlie P. Johnston, Jr. It is presented here as a follow-up to Rev. Johnston's article, “Luck's True Identity,” which appeared in the Winter, 2008 edition of The Ryburn Christian Clarion (Vol. V, No. 2).]*

**T**HERE ARE A FEW isolated scriptures in the King James Version where the word “chance” appears, however, nowhere in God's Word is the contemporary concept of chance verified. The references which use the word “chance,” or related words like “event,” “befalleth,” (or “hath befallen”) “occurrent,” “it may chance,” (or “it may be”) or the archaic “hap,” actually indicate four basic usages.\*\*

The Hebrew word *mikreh* has the basic meaning of (1) something unexpected. It is used in Deuteronomy 23:10, Ruth 2:3, I Samuel 20:26, and Ecclesiastes 3:19 and 9:2 and 3. The Hebrew word *pega* refers to simply (2) an occurrence, and is used in I Kings 5:4 and Ecclesiastes 9:11. Still another Hebrew word, *miqreh*, appearing in I Samuel 6:9, and the Greek words *ei tuchoi* (employed in Luke 10:31 and I Corinthians 14:10 and 15:37), indicate (3) an

accident, a coincidence, or a concurrence. Finally, the word *qara* is used, a Hebrew term meaning (4) to meet. It occurs in Deuteronomy 22:6 and II Samuel 1:6. None of these references imply the modern idea of “luck” or “chance.”

The only reference from the verses cited in the preceding paragraph that might appear to support the current concept of “chance” is the record in I Samuel 6:9. It concerns the opinion of certain Philistine priests and other pagan diviners. This account tells of how the leadership of the Philistines sought information from these priests regarding what to do with the Ark of the Covenant. Since they had captured it from Israel, their whole nation had been plagued. The priests ultimately instructed them to return the Ark to its rightful owner, the nation of Israel.

#### **I Samuel 6:8 and 9**

*And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him [God] for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.*

*And see, if it goeth up by the way of his [God's] own coast to Bethshemesh, [in Israel] then he [God] hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his [God's] hand that smote us; it was a chance [miqreh] that happened to us.*

The phrase, "...it was a chance that happened to us,..." appears to lend support to the concept of chance, but remember who is doing the speaking here. This reference to "chance" is nothing more than the opinion and belief of pagan, Philistine priests and diviners. This is not God's opinion. God's Word does not validate chance. These priests said that if the cart carrying the Ark did not go to its owner, Israel, then the trouble was a chance happening. Here, they were only proclaiming their belief in the possibility of a chance happening. Please note, the oxen took the straight way to Bethshemesh. According to the logic of these priests, this was an indication that chance was not the cause of their troubles, and they were absolutely right.

Not much has changed; chance often gets the credit for people's troubles today. It is easy to blame it. It is easy, and convenient, for some to deny spiritual realities and, in unbelief, lay hold upon this false doctrine. The opinions and theories of men come and go, but the Word of the Lord endures.

#### **I Peter 1:25**

*But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

The reason for the absence of the concept of chance in the Bible is easy to understand; God did not design chance. The idea of chance came from the limited minds of ignorant men. It contradicts the truth of God's Word. Chance is also antithetical to choice; it is diametrically opposed to it.

God's design for life and living *leaves nothing to chance*. What God has built into the fabric of life is choice. We humans are free and rational beings most of the time, and we have the capacity to choose built into us. We can choose to love God and believe His Word, which is always profitable to do, or we can choose to deny God and His Word, which ultimately is never beneficial. *We* select our beliefs. We can think great thoughts, or we can think sordid thoughts; it is our choice. In the end, *we* decide what we think, and *we* choose what to embrace with believing action. God has designed us with this tremendous ability so we are capable of choosing to love Him.\*

*(Rev. Charlie P. Johnston, Jr. was ordained in the early 1960s, serving, over the years, in several southern churches. He and his wife, Carol, currently live and oversee an in-home fellowship in Greenwood, Florida. For more information about Charlie's book, No Such Thing As LUCK! A Biblical Perspective, visit the website at [www.nosuchthingsluck.com](http://www.nosuchthingsluck.com), or send him an e-mail at [Johnstons850@embarqmail.com](mailto:Johnstons850@embarqmail.com).)*

Visit the *Clarion's* website at [www.godslivingroom.com](http://www.godslivingroom.com).

## **FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT**

### *Poetry*

*(This column offers our readers a variety of inspirational and edifying submissions. In this "grab-bag," you will find essays, book reviews, testimonies, poetry, compositions, letters, music reviews, and other things designed to exhort and comfort God's people.)*

## **“Meditations And Musings”**

*by Henry S. Altheide*

**I**T'S HARD TO BELIEVE that we're in our ninth year of publishing the *Clarion*. It's even harder to believe that it's been 5½ years since we first set before our readers a selection of original Christian poetry. That effort appeared in the Winter, 2006 installment (Vol. III, No. 2), and featured work, by a number of saints, that ranged from the sublime to the silly. This time, our sole contributor, Mr. Henry S. "Hank" Altheide, offers three selections, lovingly presented to bless the Body of Christ.\*\*\*

*continued on next page...*

### ***The Clarion: A Labor Of Love***

*The Ryburn Christian Clarion* is a labor of love, from saints to saints. As such, we have no paid staff, but rely on the loving financial gifts of others for operating funds. If you, or your fellowship as a whole, would like to help underwrite this outreach, regularly or by a one-time offering, please make checks or money orders payable to "The Ryburn Christian Clarion," or simply "The Clarion." Mail offerings to **The Ryburn Christian Clarion**, 420 Ryburn Avenue, Suite C-2, Dayton, Ohio 45405-2552, U. S. A. For more information, e-mail [thecarion@godslivingroom.com](mailto:thecarion@godslivingroom.com).

## BRICK BY BRICK

*A builder of great castle walls I never thought to be,  
Yet, as God's son, within my mind I build  
continuously.*

*As earthly walls stand and endure by each brick so  
fitly laid,  
My thoughts as castle bricks become, my castle  
Godly made.*

*Each brick, though small, is mighty, and I set it in its  
place.  
With love and skill and carefulness, new bricks I add  
each day.*

*Before my eyes, as on I go, the walls begin to form.  
The mind of Christ is the castle I am building; I'm  
making His thoughts my own.*

## I'LL MAKE IT COUNT

*I have but one life to live,  
And only one chance at today.  
So, today I'll make my life count,  
For I may never again pass this way.*

*Life, it has real meaning now,  
Because I have the hope.  
I'm looking at the things not seen.  
It's the anchor of my soul.*

*Your perfect love casts out all fear;  
I have Your treasure inside.*

*Now, with confidence I will reach out;  
From my life, may Your light shine.*

*This path that You have called me to,  
I'll live with all my heart,  
And because You're the reason for everything,  
Giving glory to You is the start.*

## TIME WELL-SPENT

*Loving God is time so well-spent:  
Bearing your soul, talking with Him,  
Reading His Word, basking in its light,  
Being reminded of His power and might.*

*And loving yourself is time well-spent, too,  
Seeing yourself as God wants you to:  
Beholding the holiness, the completeness you have,  
Not dwelling on failure, self-pity or lack.*

*And loving others, time well-spent it is,  
Seeking to build up, encourage and bless.  
The ones close to you, and those in your path,  
They all need your love; it's time to give back.*

*So swift are the days of all of our lives:  
Children and jobs, husbands and wives.  
Let's remind ourselves of the basic elements;  
Living in love, it is time well-spent.*

*(Mr. Henry S. Altheide has been a student and a teacher of  
the Word of God for many years. He presently resides  
with his wife, Vickie, in La Quinta, California. Please feel  
free to contact "Hank" by e-mail at [altheide@aol.com](mailto:altheide@aol.com).)*

# FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

*(This column, featuring the work of Keith Jamison, the director of The Ryburn Christian Clarion's Research Department, examines God's Word and how its application in our Twenty-First Century lives has been influenced by mythology, philosophy, and tradition.)*

## "Religious Radicalism Versus True Spiritual Zeal"

**[Editor's Note:** *During this present year, we are observing the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks on America known as "9/11." This article is presented in an effort to shed some "light" on the spiritual causes behind many such contemporary events.]*

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN** to have zeal for God? When we think of zeal for God, we often think of fanatics who go to radical extremes. As believers, we are called to have zeal for God, but can we be zealots without being extremists? Let's take a look at zeal: some real-life examples of misdirected zeal, and what the Word of God actually says about it.

The English word "zeal" comes from the Greek word *zelos*. It denotes "an ardent (or yearning) desire." To have an ardent desire for God is not a bad thing. Why then does it seem to spawn so many problems? For one thing, in the Bible, *zelos* also has a negative usage.

In Acts 5:17, *zelos* is translated as "indignation" (or, in some versions, "jealousy" or "envy"). Jealousy exemplifies an ardent desire, but often in a very negative way. Is this then the answer? Are zealots jealous? Not necessarily, for this is but one form of zeal. The general meaning of the word is simply a

straightforward, yearning desire for something. What that something is or, more importantly, what we think that something is determines our zeal. Do you have zeal for God? Take care, for your perception of what you worship will color and influence your zeal.

### **Romans 10:2**

*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

This is where the problem lies. Although people often think they are right, especially in the religious or spiritual categories, their ignorance distorts their zeal. Without the willingness to know the truth, zeal becomes warped and can only harm. Examples of zealots can be found throughout history. The ones we see nowadays tend to be terrorists, and are often Muslim, suicide bombers. Looking back at the long conflict between Islam and Christianity, one can observe that there were many zealots on both sides.

Let's start with the Crusades, which began in 1095 A.D. No matter what the reasons behind the venture may have been, it is the zeal of those who fought in the name of Christ that concerns us here. At the time, Europe was basically a war zone, with the armies of various kingdoms vying for power and resources. Furthermore, the medieval Church in Europe was warning the men that comprised these armies, most of them illiterate, that they were endangering their souls by killing one another. Many, although very afraid of damnation, knew only the military life. Subsequently, The Church, in answer to a call for help from the Byzantine emperor who was facing incursions, issued an edict stating that any who took a vow and went to free the endangered regions would receive special favor from God. In their ignorance, and supposedly for remission of their sins, these warriors, with much zeal, went forth to kill.

Another example of misdirected zeal within Christendom is the Spanish Inquisition. The Inquisition in general arose first as individual tribunals against heresy, but grew into a nearly autonomous organization within The Church. In 1480, Ferdinand and Isabella convened an inquisition to consolidate The Church in Spain. By 1492, with the defeat of the Moors, Islamic peoples from Africa, Spain's unification was complete.

The Moors, who had invaded Spain in 711 A.D., were forcibly expelled. Also, the Spanish Inquisition sought to bring all who remained into The Church, that is, as they understood it. Best known for its forced conversions of Jews, it also "converted" Muslims, and went after so-called Protestant heretics. At the time, Church law stated that forced conversions were not valid, but this was taken to mean only physical force; conversion by coercion was deemed allowable. Once converted, these poor souls were rigidly watched, lest

they return to their old beliefs. If they did, they were considered heretics, and subjected to barbaric torture. Torture was standard practice, and the inquisitors were very zealous in their duties. Although these practices were far removed from any New Testament teachings, any who failed to accept their ideas concerning God and The Church suffered ignobly.

This narrow-minded adherence to a strict and rigid interpretation of a belief is the hallmark of the modern terrorist. For example, Afghanistan's Taliban exemplify this in the modern world. Made up mostly of Pashtun tribes, they practice perhaps one of the strictest interpretations of Islamic law. They are so strict that, according to the United Nations, between 1996 and 2001, they were responsible for fifteen massacres of civilians. Terrorists like these shed innocent blood to intimidate and get to their enemies.

The Bible gives us examples of people like this. One such person was Saul of Tarsus. Although later as the Apostle Paul he would fearlessly preach Christ to both Judean and Gentile alike, he was first a consenting party to the stoning of the Christian martyr Stephen. (Acts 7:54-60) He later led the persecution against the early Church. Before his conversion, he "...was zealous toward God,..." but he "...persecuted...both men and women..." who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 22:3 and 4)

Galatians 1:14, penned years after his conversion, gives Saul's (or Paul's) recounting of how he had been "...more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of...[the]...fathers." He was adamant in his zeal for what he thought true Judaism was, and was willing to kill for it, but his views were based on "...traditions,..." and were "...not according to knowledge." (Rom. 10:2) On the road to Damascus, however, he saw the light. (Acts 9:3-19) His life then changed direction, but he lost none of his zeal.

### **II Peter 1:20**

*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private [idios, in Greek, meaning, "one's own"] interpretation.*

If God's Word is of no one's own interpretation, then whose interpretation is it of? If it's by public consensus, then it is meaningless, for people seldom agree on *what* and *how* to worship. The problem, as we have already noted, is that people's zeal for God is often "...not according to knowledge." (again, Rom. 10:2) No matter what those of other beliefs may do, our zeal for God must be based upon an accurate understanding of the Scriptures. God tells us what His Word means, free of any private interpretation. We allow the revealed Word to speak to us, and adjust our thinking and behavior accordingly. Then our zeal will help, and not hurt.

### **I Corinthians 14:12**

*Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying [“building up”] of the church.*

### **Romans 14:16**

*Let not then your good be evil spoken of:*

As those who claim salvation in the name of Jesus Christ, in our zeal for God, we are to edify the body of believers. We are to be a blessing, and not a curse. We are not to allow the things of God to be perceived as being evil. In II Peter 2:1 and 2, we are warned that “...there shall be false teachers..., who privily shall bring in damnable heresies,...by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”

It is these false teachers and their heresies that induce some, in their blind zeal, to run amok. We are not to be as one of these, but are to bless, teach, and heal, rather than harm. We are to study and do our utmost to rightly divide the Word of Truth (II Tim. 2:15), as well as *live it*. Additionally, we must learn to apply our zeal to those things that God in His Word deems worthy of our ardent efforts, and not the things men espouse.

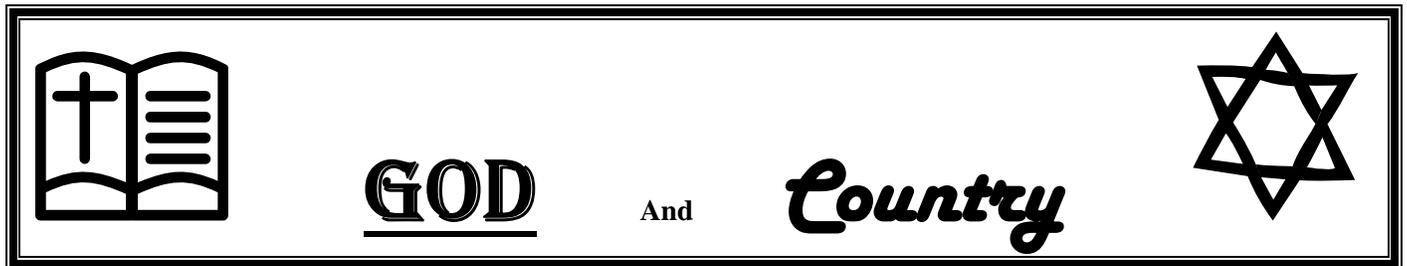
### **I Corinthians 14:1a**

*Follow after [“pursue”] charity [“love”], and desire [zeal, in Greek] spiritual gifts [pneumatikos, in Greek],...*

It is not too much zeal that makes one wrong, but rather misdirected zeal: a zeal for an imperfect, human idea of what the truth should be. As God’s beloved children, we are called to pursue the love of God in evidence in our lives, and to have a yearning zeal for the things of the spirit of God. In I Corinthians 14:1a, the word “desire” is rendered from *zeloo*, a verb related to the Greek word *zelos*. It means, “to be zealous of,” or “to have yearning zeal for.”

This zeal is to be aimed at *pneumatikos*, the Greek word indicating “spiritual things” or “spiritual matters.” Rather than a zeal that drives men down a road to where they seek to control or even destroy their detractors, true, Godly zeal, as The Word shows, shall guide us to pursue love, the things of the spirit, and that which builds up the Body of Christ. All else is folly.\*

*(Mr. Keith Jamison is the director of The Ryburn Christian Clarion’s Research Department, as well as the Clarion’s production assistant. Send your comments and questions, or your article submissions, to him at [rcc.rd.keith@gmail.com](mailto:rcc.rd.keith@gmail.com).)*



*(In this column, our editor-in-chief, Rick Heeter, will explore the Judeo-Christian heritage of America and her social and political institutions. Through this running commentary, we will discover where we came from as a people, and how we can preserve our unique, cultural identity and the liberties it fosters.)*

## **“The Travesty And Triumph Of John Hus”**

*by Rick Heeter*

**O**N NEW YEAR’S EVE of 1384, the man credited with the first stirrings of the Reformation passed into history. At his death, those who held power in the errant Church breathed a sigh of relief, while others, hungering for genuine spiritual food, drew inspiration from the life of commitment to God that had come to its earthly end. John Wycliffe (See “**‘The Morning Star Of The Reformation’**”: Fall, 2010; Vol. VIII, No. 1.), an ardent preacher and writer, had advocated the Bible in everyone’s native tongue, had railed against the abuses of Church clerics, had denounced The Church’s right to meddle in civil affairs, and had rejected the notion that anyone save Christ was the head of The

Church. Despite his defiant stand, those in power were unable, by threats or execution, to still his voice. Instead, he died of natural causes.\*\*\*\*

Unlike some before him and many after him, Wycliffe escaped being burned at the stake, possibly due to the political influence of John of Gaunt, the Earl of Lancaster. Both despised the secular reach of the medieval Church, and Wycliffe’s association with the earl shielded him against those who sought his life. His life, therefore, was spared long enough for his widely-read tracts to kindle spiritual unrest in central Europe, where an indolent, Bohemian priest would be awakened to a calling from God.

John Hus (sometimes spelled “Huss”) was born in 1369, in Bohemia, part of what is now the Czech Republic. The son of peasants, he knew poverty, and from an early age determined to improve his station in life. He trained for the priesthood, not because he felt called of God, but to earn a living, and to be highly regarded by men.<sup>1</sup>



*John Hus*

Hus’ academic pursuits culminated in a doctorate, and he was ordained in 1401. He managed to secure a position at Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, an early center of religious reform. Here, his sermons could be preached in Czech, rather than Latin. Meanwhile, the writings of Wycliffe had fired his interest, leading him into a personal study of the Scriptures. This, in turn, led to a profound change in Hus, altering his motives for priestly service.

The University of Prague soon became a hotbed of spiritual debate, causing a division between Czechs (who sought greater, local authority in The Church, and moral reform among the clergy) and German students. Hus aligned himself with the Czechs, who also desired that the Bible be emphasized more in their studies. The king of Bohemia entered the melee on the side of the Czechs, and the Germans were compelled to finish their educations elsewhere, but not before the Hussites, as they were called, had been labeled as heretics.

At the time, a power struggle was occupying the energies of the upper hierarchy of The Church, and there was little patience shown to those who stirred the pot. Having fallen into disfavor, Hus was forbidden to preach, and was summarily excommunicated. With local, Bohemian support, however, he continued to speak the Word of God at Bethlehem Chapel.

Alas, this breathing spell, and local support, was to come to an end. The Church, at the Council of Constance in 1415, proclaimed John Wycliffe to be a heretic, and decreed that all his writings should be

burned, and his body exhumed, burned, and the ashes scattered. In addition to all this, adherents to Wycliffe’s writings were hunted down. Even John Hus, who had been brought into the true service of God by Wycliffe’s legacy, was lured into a trap where Church officials took him into custody.

John Hus was burned at the stake in 1415, for preaching God’s Word, and defying those who claimed to represent God. The manuscript Bibles that Wycliffe and the Lollards had produced were used as kindling to ignite the fagots of wood. As the flames rose about him, Hus prayed, “Lord Jesus, it is for Thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray Thee to have mercy on my enemies.” His final words to those assembled were, “In one hundred years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform cannot be suppressed.” A century later, Martin Luther nailed his *95 Theses Of Contention* to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. A revolution that would lead to a true understanding of The Church as a spiritual organism had begun.\*

*(Mr. Rick Heeter is the editor-in-chief of The Ryburn Christian Clarion. He also serves as a columnist, and as the music and book reviewer for the Clarion. You may reach him by e-mail at [theclarion@godslivingroom.com](mailto:theclarion@godslivingroom.com).)*

**Endnotes:**

1) [www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/martyrs/huss.html](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/martyrs/huss.html);  
Accessed on July 19 and December 13, 2011.

*(Join us for “GOD And Country”, featured in every other issue of The Ryburn Christian Clarion, as Rick Heeter, the Clarion’s editor-in-chief, takes us on a journey to examine America’s Judeo-Christian foundation.)*

*\*Articles and columns submitted to The Ryburn Christian Clarion are edited to ensure correct spelling and punctuation, proper grammar, and clarity of expression. Furthermore, no article or column herein should be construed to be a comprehensive study of the subject under consideration.*

*\*\*The book No Such Thing As LUCK! A Biblical Perspective, by Rev. Charlie P. Johnston, Jr., was reviewed in the Spring, 2007 issue of The Ryburn Christian Clarion (Vol. IV, No. 3). For more information about Charlie’s book, feel free to visit his website at [www.nosuchthingasluck.com](http://www.nosuchthingasluck.com). To read our book review, please visit the Clarion’s website at [www.godslivingroom.com](http://www.godslivingroom.com).*

*\*\*\*The work of Mr. Henry S. Altheide first appeared in the Spring, 2005 edition of The Ryburn Christian Clarion (Vol. II, No. 3), as an article entitled “ ‘He Is Risen!’ ” In our Winter, 2006 issue (Vol. III, No. 2), we featured “ ‘Again, I Say, Rejoice’ ”, an array of original, Christian poems in which “Hank” contributed one called “Lord, I Believe”. Finally, in our Summer, 2006 installment (Vol. III, No. 4), we carried his meditation piece entitled “Reflections Of A Sunday Morning” (or “Staying Well Informed”).*

*\*\*\*\*We extend our thanks to Mr. Keith J. Daniels, of North Smithfield, Rhode Island, for his background research that so nicely enhanced the article “The Travesty And Triumph Of John Hus”, which appears in this issue of The Ryburn Christian Clarion.*