

The Ryburn Christian Clarion

Upholding the Accuracy of the God-Breathed Word

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

THERE ARE WIZARDS IN THE LAND!

UNLIKE THE CULTURE AND SOCIETY one reads about in the Scriptures, we live in an eclectic swirl of varying philosophies and belief systems. Even though elements of foreign thought and unbelief troubled Old and New Testament saints alike, as a rule, the day to day lives of people in Biblical times were centered around the Word of God. The doctrines and practices they observed were sometimes influenced by pagan societies, but the worship of God and service to His people were woven into the fabric of daily life. Believers were even socially segregated from unbelievers, but this is not the case in Twenty-First Century America.

One advantage to separating the faithful from infidels was that it mitigated some of the less-desirable influences of those who worshipped false gods and practiced “curious arts” (Acts 19:19). It also isolated the ungodly to the extent that they *stood out* and were recognized as those to be avoided. Because of this, the society of believers had a measure of protection from Satanic influences. Today, things are quite different. Our modern culture is such that a child of God encounters false teachings, and even idolatry, on a daily basis.

Lies and deception pour into our homes from televisions, radios, and computers with Internet access. Videos, DVDs, CDs, and audio tapes purport to entertain and inform us, while many times programming and numbing our minds with unhealthy ideas and wasteful thought patterns. A believer may even find himself living in an apartment complex with a witch upstairs and a crack-head right across the hall. These dark influences are further magnified when their friends drop in to visit. This example is a microcosm of life in our society during the Age of

continued on next page...

INSIDE AT A GLANCE

THINGS ARE SUCH IN OUR NATION, that we felt it now prudent to “take the gloves off”. We present, in this installment, an unapologetic and unvarnished look at idolatry in America. May the people of God awaken!

“THERE ARE WIZARDS IN THE LAND!” This is a “clarion call” to Christians to live the greatness of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. When the Word of God is *lived*, the forces of darkness must retreat!

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

“GOD’S MATCHLESS WORD” is graced, this issue, by a sister in Christ who began her walk with God in the 1970s sharing The Word on the University of Cincinnati campus. Her interestingly titled article, “**There Is No God**”, is a timeless exhortation to make His Word our own.

by Michele Kelch Nations.....2

“FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT”: Do you think psychics have tapped into latent mental abilities that we all have, or that mediums consult real spirit guides? Do those who practice Eastern meditation techniques commune with ascended beings? **“Saul’s Psychic Hotline”** reveals what is actually behind such beliefs.

by Keith Jamison.....3

“FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT” continues our major thrust, unveiling, from the Scriptures, the sinister powers that are behind popular avenues of “spirituality”. Our brother in Christ from Ft. Mitchell, Kentucky returns this issue, opposing wrong doctrines and proclaiming, **“God’s Word Is In The Land!”**

by Roger J. Tobler.....5

“GOD AND COUNTRY”, appearing for the first time in this issue, begins a thorough study of the Judeo-Christian heritage of America and her social and political institutions. The opening article, **“AMERICA: A Land Reserved?”**, graphically depicts the hand of God preparing for a time and place in which His Word could once again prevail.

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

Grace. Indeed, our culture is quite different from that of Israel during Old Testament times. In I Samuel 28:3, we note that King Saul "...put away...the wizards, out of the land." He could do this because Israel politically and spiritually was a theocracy, with Almighty God as its Head, and having kings *originally* ruling by divine designation. Our culture today is wholly different. Nevertheless, the Heavenly Father has not left His modern-day believers without a remedy.

In II Corinthians 6:14 and following, we are instructed to be "...not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:...", and to "...be ye separate...(verse 17)". This, however, is talking about separating ourselves mentally, spiritually, and in our conduct. We are not called to remove ourselves physically from the presence of those who do not believe, for, then, how would we share the Word of God with them? The Lord Jesus Christ set the example, not by avoiding the unrighteous, but by consorting with them, and, so, giving them a model to emulate. We, as believers, are exhorted in The Word to "...follow [or "walk step by step"] in his steps:...(I Pet. 2:21b)".

As children of God, we have been called to be "...transformed [*metamorphoo* in Koine Greek, meaning

"transfigured" or "changed"] by the renewing of...[our]...mind[s]...(Rom. 12:2)". As we read and study God's Word and change our thinking accordingly, our behavior will change. **This** is what separates us from unbelievers. Rather than living in our own communities and enclaves, as was the norm in other times, God, Himself, protects us from evil influences as we live His Word, motivated by the love of God. In addition, our conduct enables us to *stand out* so those seeking answers know where to go for help (Phil. 2:15 and 16a).

In our turbulent, modern world, we may often find ourselves surrounded by spiritual darkness and hedonism, but our Father has provided abundant resources that will allow His people to rise above temporary circumstances and be "...more than conquerors..." in every situation (Rom. 8:37). Our prayer, and believing, is for *all His people* to grow up in Christ so they can see and live what God has richly made available in this day and time. We believe that we, at the *Clarion*, can be a helpful part of that growth process. Indeed, we mean to do our best, and we know that some of you will take a stand with us. Until next issue, may we all grow in the greatness of God's wonderful, matchless Word.

by Rick Heeter, Editor-in-Chief

Asleep In Christ...

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of a Christian brother and faithful steward of the mysteries of God. On May 5, 2005, Rev. John Davis Hendricks fell asleep in Christ and silently awaits his Lord's return. Rev. Hendricks, noted for his frank and abundant teachings on love, grace, and forgiveness, was the founder of Christian Research And Fellowship, headquartered in Marietta, Georgia. Those of us who have been touched by his life and ministry feel his absence most keenly. Our prayer to God is that He will lovingly comfort and sustain John's wife, Mary Ann, and his daughters, Rochelle and Suzanne.

GOD'S MATCHLESS WORD:

A Forum For Presenting The Light Of Life

("God's Matchless Word: A Forum For Presenting The Light Of Life" 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.)

“ ‘There Is No God’ ”

by Michele Kelch Nations

I CAN PROVE TO YOU from the Word of God, the Bible, that it says *there is no God*. Let's take a look at Psalms 14:1 where it states, "...There is no God." Now, what have I done? Have I taken part of a verse out of its context so it seems to mean something totally different than what's intended? Let's look at it a little more closely to see what David wrote. Psalms 14:1 states, in its entirety, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt [Who are? The fools!], they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good."

What I have just done is commit an act of libel, that is, **if** I promoted it as actually being true that the Bible

teaches *there is no God*. If I falsified a *written* statement in this way, an author could sue me for libel. Libel, by definition, or to have libeled, according to *Funk And Wagnell's Standard Desk Dictionary*, is "To defame or discredit, as by false or malicious statements; as in a written statement, especially in published form." Most of us are more familiar with slander, which *Funk And Wagnell's* defines as "An oral statement of a false, malicious or defamatory nature." We see this kind of thing happen frequently with movie stars and political figures or, in the case of libel, in newspapers regarding individuals such as politicians who have been misquoted.

When it comes to the Scriptures, there have been countless times I have seen people adjust or interpret verses to mean what they think they mean, or inappropriately apply them to the content of their teachings. Let's go to The Word itself to see how God views this practice. We will find our answer in II Peter 1:20, where it states, "Knowing this first [Second? Last? NO! FIRST!], that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." The word "private" is *idios*, according to the Greek, which means "one's own", therefore, no prophecy of the Scriptures is of one's own (private) interpretation. Why? It is explained in verse 21.

II Peter 1:21 reads, "For [The reason being that] the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [or "Spirit"]." Obviously, these men didn't just sit down and write their own thoughts. Who *moved* them to write? God! I don't think it could be stated any clearer than that, but still people refuse to honor God's Word as GOD'S WORDS: the written and revealed and living **WORDS OF GOD!** Doesn't it behoove us to let The Word interpret itself as we search for truth, as God would have His children do? How do we do that?

II Timothy tells us how to begin. In chapter 2, verse 15, we read, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [orthotomounta] the word of truth." The words "rightly dividing" are translated from the Greek word *orthotomounta*, which means to cut exactly right, like a diamond. If you incorrectly cut a diamond, you would have a worthless pile of diamond dust, but when cut precisely, you have a valuable, beautiful jewel. This is

how I see working the Scriptures, which are so wonderfully written, so full of wisdom and edification for our hearts and souls. God put all these useful, wonderful things in His Word *for us*. No one but God has the right to interpret it, as was His intention.

I exhort you to approach God's Word with meekness and humility, and as you study it, you'll see how it unfolds to bless and uplift your life. Apply it daily, and see how people come to you for answers to their questions, because you hold the keys that unlock the truth. In a Biblical research class I have taken, I learned some of those keys: that scripture interprets *itself*, 1) in the verse, 2) in the context, and/or 3) where it's been used before. These keys to research have helped me tremendously as I have studied God's Word. The answers **are** in there, and as we diligently study and *let The Word speak*, it will unfold before our eyes.

I leave you to contemplate the beauty of the following verse from Hebrews 4. Verse 12 declares, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Let the living words of God bless you and guide you on your journey through life, and in your studies. God bless!*

(Ms. Michele Kelch Nations was introduced to the serious study of the Word of God at age 17. Initially, she was involved in college outreach and has been participating in Biblical research classes for thirty years. She has lived and studied in California and Florida, and now resides in her home state, Ohio, with her three children.)

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FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

("From The Research Department", featuring our columnist, Keith Jamison, examines God's Word and how its application in our Twenty-First Century lives has been influenced by mythology, philosophy, and tradition.)

"Saul's Psychic Hotline"

JUST ABOUT EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK nowadays, you see ads lauding the abilities of psychics. They have been around for a long time, and the Bible even talks of them, although, in ancient times, they were referred to by other names. The Bible's Levitical laws speak of avoiding them, sending them away, and even putting them to death. While the latter of these options is not available today, it was used by the tribes of Israel in Old Testament times. This is because their form of government was a theocracy. In a theocracy, there is no separation of church and state. The church *is* the state.

Deuteronomy 18, verses 10 and 11, lists a number of forbidden practices, stating that, "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times [an astrologer], or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer [a hypnotist], or a

consulter with familiar spirits [*owb* in Hebrew; a psychic or medium], or a wizard [*yiddeoni* in Hebrew], or a necromancer [a medium or sensitive]." All these things are abominations to God. The word "psychic" is not used in the text. This is because "psychic" is a modern word, even though its origin is old. It is from the Greek word *psychikos*, which means "of the soul (*psuche*)".

A psychic is a person who *appears* to be sensitive to non-physical forces, someone who can perform as a spiritual medium. "Medium" is a term popularized about a century ago. Psychics (or mediums) have "spirit guides" and claim to speak to the souls of the departed. This obviously fits the description of the "consulter with familiar spirits" from Deuteronomy 18:11. While this is true, a closer look at the word "wizard" is also intriguing.

The word translated “wizard” is *yiddeoni* in Hebrew. This word means “a knowing one” and is related to the English word “wise”. The root of this word is *yada*, meaning, “to know”. This means that wizards are people who have some form of special knowledge. Since there are many ways to gather knowledge, both spiritual and natural, it is the source of their knowledge that is the concern. To learn their source of knowledge, we must look at the text.

In every verse in which *yiddeoni* is used, it is preceded in the context by the Hebrew word *ob* (but there are times when *ob* occurs without *yiddeoni*). *Ob* means “necromancer” or “medium”, someone who supposedly *speaks* to the dead. In almost all cases, *ob* indicates, in the King James Version (KJV), one who has a familiar spirit (or spirits). More specifically, it refers to those who “consult” these spirits. The only exception is in Job 32:19, which reads, “Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles [*ob*].” This difference in translation merits a closer look at this Hebrew word.

The origin of *ob* is the same as that of the Hebrew word *ab*, which means “father”. This is apparently arrived at through the idea of a child prattling, or babbling, its father’s name. It is properly defined as “a mumbler”. An empty vessel, such as a wine bottle, is sometimes called a “mumbler”, due to the hollow sound it can produce. This can be seen in the British use of the term “mumbler” for a glassblower. In tying this in with our subject, it should be noted that charlatans throughout the ages have used empty jars to produce “ghostly” voices. This demonstrates a connection between “bottles” and “mediums”.

Time and time again, “wizards” and “familiar spirits” are shown to be inextricably linked in the Scriptures. Since *yiddeoni* (wizard) is always used with *ob* (one having a familiar spirit), it is obvious that the source of the wizards’ knowledge is the familiar spirits. The first three uses of both Hebrew words are in Leviticus.

Leviticus 19:31

Regard not them that have familiar spirits [ob], neither seek after wizards [yiddeoni], to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:6

And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits [ob], and after wizards [yiddeoni], to go a-whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.

Leviticus 20:27

A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit [ob], or that is a wizard [yiddeoni], shall surely be put to death:

they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.

These uses, as well as God’s Word from Deuteronomy 18, clearly show that we should have nothing to do with psychics (*ob*; mediums) because of the unholy spirit powers they consult.

In I Samuel, chapter 28, King Saul goes to a medium to ostensibly speak with the shade of Samuel, the prophet. Twice we are reminded in the context that Saul had removed the wizards from the land. This was in accordance with the Levitical laws. The Word also shows us that Saul knew he should not go to see the medium, yet, in verse 7, he asks his servants to find him “...a woman that hath a familiar spirit,....” They tell him there is one in Endor. The Hebrew phrase used in Saul’s request, *ishshah ba’alah ob*, is used twice in this verse. It is more accurately rendered “...a woman who has dominion over a familiar spirit,....” The double reference in the verse is to emphasize exactly whom King Saul was seeking and to establish the error in doing so. The verse also contains the first two uses of *ob* (one having a familiar spirit) without *yiddeoni* (wizard). In verse 8, we see the king disguise himself, and go to this woman, and ask her to “...divine...by the familiar spirit, and bring...up, whom I shall name unto thee.” This is the same thing asked of psychics today.

In looking at King Saul’s disobedience to God, we should take note of his untimely demise, for it is linked directly to his dabbling in forbidden spiritual practices. This is a serious lesson that believers today should understand. I Chronicles 10:13 reveals, “So Saul died for [“because of”] his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it [the spirit];....” God’s warnings against such practices are never arbitrary, but are meant to bring safety and blessings to His people. It is in our best interest to pay attention.

Psychics have been around for a long time. This account of King Saul clearly shows him using one many centuries before that term was coined. The Bible tells us that no genuine good comes from psychics and the like. Rather, we should put our believing and trust in God and His Word. King Saul used a “psychic hotline”, and it cost him dearly. We should learn from his example.*

(Mr. Keith Jamison has been a student of the Bible for many years. He is presently the director of The Ryburn Christian Clarion’s Research Department and develops material for the “From The Research Department” column.)

THE RYBURN CHRISTIAN CLARION:

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FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT

Essay

(“For Your Spiritual Enrichment” offers our readers a variety of inspirational and edifying submissions. In this “grab-bag”, appearing from time to time, you will find essays, book reviews, testimonies, poetry, letters, and other things designed to exhort and comfort God’s people.)

“God’s Word Is In The Land!”

by Roger J. Tobler

IN THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS, chapter 4, verse 14, we read, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive....” The same verse from the late Dr. George M. Lamsa’s Aramaic translation reads, “That we henceforth be not as children easily stirred and carried away by every wind of false doctrines of men, who through their craftiness are artful in deceiving the people.” As the opening page of this newsletter states, “there are wizards in the land!” Well, I’ve observed there’s that, and *a whole lot more*.

There are many false ways and paths appearing as light, or ideas offering some semblance of truth. These ways can often be very enticing to the unknowing, but more so to those seeking answers in their lives. Some people say these paths are just different ways to God, or that it’s okay to follow *any* path to Heaven. Others believe as long as it is some “spiritual” path, you will get there, but *that’s not what The Word says*. The only way to God, our Father, is by Jesus Christ, and it’s God’s written Word that makes Christ known.

Ethelbert W. Bullinger, who lived from 1837 to 1913, and who, to this day is noted as a “Champion of the Scriptures”, made an interesting remark about Ephesians 4:14 in his writings. I paraphrase here a part of his observation regarding this verse: *They (the crafty men) subtly lie in wait, with a view, or a stratagem to deceive. The method or scheme is that of the Devil, himself, and not merely error or accidental*. Indeed, it is no accident that there are so many false ways and paths available to follow, having the deceiving light and allure of mysticism, like some of the New Age practices. They are “spiritual”, it’s true, but they are not from the True God.

Reading from Lamsa’s translation of the Bible, we note that those who promulgate these false ways “...are ARTFUL [author’s emphasis] in deceiving the people.” What an awesome way to describe the deceit! They are artful and very clever in their craftiness. It’s framed just right, with the right glitter, flash, and appeal. These enticements are inviting to the five senses, but they are *counterfeit ways*. Such things as astrology, palm reading, tarot cards, psychic and/or aura readings, witchcraft (including “white” witches),

parapsychology, feng shui, charms and talismans, idols, patron saints and their statues, hypnotism, shamans, supposed conversations with the dead, the *Crossing Over* television program and its host, and many other similar things are ALL FALSE WAYS.

Let’s take a look at four Old Testament verses from Deuteronomy to see what God has said about such things.

Deuteronomy 18:9-12

When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after [“according to”] the abominations of those nations.

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

For all that do these things are an abomination [a “detestation”] unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Sometimes the Old Testament speaks loudly and clearly, and it is in our best interest to listen. We, as believers, have a responsibility to stay free of spiritual contamination, and to help seeking people get delivered from the snares of the Adversary, the Devil.

There is a record in the Book of Acts which will enhance our study of false worship.

Acts 8:9-11

But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched [through devil spirit trickery] the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

To whom they all [the whole community] gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

That sounds just like today! Whole communities and various groups fall prey to these deceitful ways, and the

ones promoting them. Today, as in Acts 8, people read their books, attend their lectures, observe their lying signs and wonders, and marvel and pay homage to such as Simon, as if people like this represent the “great power of God.” How wrong can people be? Simon fooled the people of Samaria just as the same trickery fools people today. Instead of seeking God through Jesus Christ, they pay heed to anything that “looks” Godly, or that gives them a sense of the “supernatural”.

The Apostle Paul asked in Galatians 3:1, “...who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth,...?” The context, in this verse, is different than that under consideration in this article, but the question is appropriate for both topics, that covered in Galatians as well as the subject in Acts 8. Those that believe in psychics, astrologers, soothsayers, palm readers, hypnotists, tarot cards, and so forth have been “bewitched”, deceived, and deluded by devil spirit powers. It’s a shame that so many are mesmerized by this garbage, and refuse to look to the True God and His Word. People seem to easily converse about this “supernatural” stuff, but balk at discussing God and the Scriptures.

Look at what happens when believers take a stand for God. In Acts 8, Philip came to town and preached Christ unto the people (verse 5). When they gave heed to what Philip taught, they were healed and delivered from the bondage and power and trickery of the Devil, which had been presented by Simon, the sorcerer. As a result, there was great joy in the city (verse 8). Many believed what Philip taught, and were born again, (verses 6, 7, and 12). Finally, even Simon believed (verse 13), because God is more powerful than the Adversary.

There are no special, dormant powers of the mind; there are, instead, two sources of *spiritual* power in which we have the freedom of will to believe: the power from the True God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the power of the Devil, shown forth in some of the false ways indicated in this discussion. Simon had been

seduced by the power of Satan, and even operated deceiving powers, fooling people with his bag of tricks, and ignorantly opposing Almighty God. Then, Simon believed and freely turned to the Living God. As the remainder of the account in Acts 8 shows, it took some time and teaching, but Simon began to understand what God has made available to His children. Philippians 3:10a reads, “That I may know him [Jesus Christ], and the power of [“in”] his resurrection,...” It takes time to learn and know what God has made available, and the captivity from which He has delivered us.

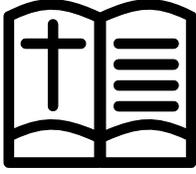
Acts 26:18 describes our Heavenly Father’s desire concerning His children. Again, let’s look at the verse from Lamsa’s Aramaic translation. Regarding His sons and daughters, God wants “To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God and receive forgiveness [“remission”] of sins and a portion with the saints who are of the faith in me [Jesus Christ].” God wants our eyes open that we may see our way out of the darkness, and not be fooled by every supernatural *fad* that comes our way (Again, see Ephesians 4:14.).

The opening article in this issue of the *Clarion* tells us “there are wizards in the land”, but we can live separate and apart from that darkness by obeying The Word. As believers, we have an awesome privilege and responsibility to take a stand for the One True God. “God has no hands but our hands.... He has no feet but our feet...” with which to walk among the darkness and bring the light of His Word to people. Most modern-day New Age ideas are just “old age” tricks with new names and a new look. I’m thankful God’s Word is in the land, and that we have access to it. May the greatness of His Word be sown in the “land” of our hearts.*

(Mr. Roger J. Tobler has been involved in Biblical studies since 1978. He is a graduate of numerous Biblical research classes and presently studies with Christian Family Fellowship Ministry, headquartered in Tipp City, Ohio.)

HELP US MOVE GOD’S WORD OVER AMERICA!

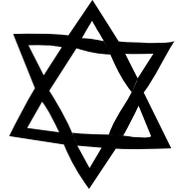
*If you are interested in submitting an article for our “God’s Matchless Word” column or, perhaps, an essay, some original poetry, or a testimony for our “For Your Spiritual Enrichment” column, please note that it is best to send them on a 3½” floppy disk, using a standard Microsoft® Word format. For additional information, feel free to call us at (937) 275-3316, or send an e-mail to rcc@proapc.com. If you would like to send a letter to the editor, you may use our e-mail address, or simply write **The Ryburn Christian Clarion**, 420 Ryburn Avenue, Suite C-2, Dayton, Ohio 45405-2552. If you desire to support our outreach work financially, please make your offerings payable to “The Ryburn Christian Clarion”, and mail them to the same address.*



GOD

And

Country



(Beginning with this installment of The Ryburn Christian Clarion, and appearing in every summer and winter issue, "GOD And Country", featuring our editor-in-chief, Rick Heeter, will explore the Judeo-Christian heritage of America and her social and political institutions. Through a running commentary, we'll discover where we came from as a people, and how we can preserve our unique cultural identity and the liberties it fosters.)

“AMERICA: A Land Reserved?”

by Rick Heeter

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

II Chronicles 7:14

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA is a truly unique nation. Not since the days of ancient Israel has a country been so blessed by the God of Heaven. Even before our national inception in 1776, the Almighty was at work in the affairs of men to ultimately draw to our shores an element of humanity frustrated by European tyranny, tired of the scourge of poverty, and plagued by religious wars and persecution in which those who believed in Bible-based Christianity were hounded as heretics, and sometimes publicly executed for their beliefs. Indeed, many of those who made initial inroads into the American wilderness nurtured an abiding love for the God of the Bible, and sought to worship Him in a remote land that would guard their right to do so. The roots of America, however, stretch even further back in time.

Before Christopher Columbus made his historic first voyage to the New World, before Eric the Red and Leif Ericson plied the chilly waters around Greenland and Newfoundland in their Viking longboats, before the European continent slid inexorably into the Dark Ages as the Roman Empire deteriorated from within, God, in His foreknowledge, saw America. He saw the vast stretch of verdant grandeur that would someday be peopled by liberty-loving individuals who would strive to enshrine Biblical principles in their founding documents, political structures, social institutions, public laws, and personal codes of conduct. He knew of a future nation inhabited by an array of peoples from far-flung places that would be less than perfect, that would often be rocked by factionalism, and that would not always live up to its high ideals. He knew, also, that this country would stand against and defeat political and military oppression on numerous occasions; would feed the world through its abundant agricultural production; would set a universal example and standard for individual liberty; and would

establish an open society, providing a platform for the greatest outreach of God's Word since the First Century.

God, Who is the Searcher of hearts (I Chron. 28:9 and Rom. 8:27), knew, also, that the ministry of His Word, which brought salvation and deliverance to many in the early days of The Church, would be compromised by unfaithful men. Indeed, elements of unbelief had been sown during the life of the Apostle Paul. In I Timothy 1:5 and 6, we note, “Now the end of the commandment is charity [“the love of God”] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved [or “missed the mark”] have turned aside unto vain jangling;...” Paul lamented that these foolish ones did not understand “...what they say, nor whereof they affirm (verse 7).” In II Timothy, which was recorded during the First Century Church's decline, the apostle continued his warnings, declaring that “...all they which are in Asia [Minor] be turned away from me;...(chapter 1, verse 15).” Acts 19, verses 9 and 10, states that all Asia Minor had heard The Word under the ministry of Paul. At the end of his life, though, he decries the fact that the believers of Asia Minor, especially the leadership responsible for upholding the accuracy of The Word, had turned their backs on him and what he taught.

All of this, God foresaw. He had worked patiently throughout the ages with those who were meek enough to believe and obey His voice. Men like Noah and Abraham; Moses and Joshua; and Samuel, David, and Hezekiah walked with Him for brief moments, helping God lay the foundations of the plan of redemption for mankind. Faithful women, too, like Deborah, Ruth, Esther, and Mary furthered the cause of God, culminating in the birth and ministry of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. As foretold in The Word, the Lord fulfilled His calling, dying for the sins of the world, and purchasing with His spotless life

redemption and eternal salvation for all who will believe on His name. After His resurrection from the dead, He ascended into Heaven, and, on the Day of Pentecost, poured out upon all men that which God had been working toward since the fall of Adam, namely, the gift of holy spirit, a restored spiritual connection with the Creator.

For a brief span of years, in the First Century, men and women walked with “power from on high (Luke 24:49)”, boldly serving as “able ministers of the new testament (II Cor. 3:6a)”, and doing the works of Jesus Christ (John 14:12) because of the spirit of Christ that dwelt within them (Col. 1:27). Sadly, it did not last. Satan, taking advantage of the weaknesses of the flesh, began to sow divisions and unbelief among the redeemed until essential elements of the knowledge of what they had received at the time of salvation were lost. Loaded with God-given power and authority, but largely ignorant of what they had, Christians evangelized concerning what they still understood while migrating into Africa, Asia, and, especially, Europe, where their beliefs were further adulterated by false religions. Without uncontaminated spiritual truth to undergird and stabilize the Body of Christ, The Church, the civilizations of the early Christian Era drifted into an epoch of ignorance and cultural disintegration known to us as the Dark Ages. During this time, much ancient knowledge was forgotten, including many of the remaining God-breathed tenets of Christianity. True believing was supplanted by standardized religious rites that could never secure intimate fellowship with the Heavenly Father. In his craftiness, the Devil knew he could not undo the finished work of Jesus Christ, for those who believe on that name have eternal life established by Almighty God, and that *cannot* be undone. The knowledge of the believers’ power and authority in Christ, however, can be perverted so the child of God becomes helpless against the attacks of the Adversary. This is *exactly* what Satan did, working through the weaknesses of the flesh. The result was an almost-powerless Church steeped in fruitless ceremonies that added nothing to the saints’ relationship with God, and, by endless works of the flesh, made a mockery of the redemption that is in Christ. All of this, however, was foreknown of God.

God, therefore, Who “...will have [or “desires”] all men to be saved,...(I Tim. 2:4a)”, worked with longsuffering in the affairs of believing men, as He had done in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared, a period of almost 120 years. Likewise, as civilization, and His children, languished in ignorance and impotence, God moved in the lives of those few who had paid “earnest heed” to those vestiges of truth (Heb. 2:1) that had been handed down to them by other faithful ones who had not fallen under the spell of ritualized “worship”. Gradually, and ponderously as men measure the passing of events, stirrings of knowledge, both spiritual and natural, began to awaken the minds of men in a social and cultural and scientific overthrow of the status quo known as the Renaissance, meaning the “rebirth”. Hot on the heels of this social revolution came changes, and even upheaval, in The Church as new scientific discoveries compelled men

of the established orthodoxy to dust off the Scriptures in an effort to validate the supremacy of religion over science.

Is it, therefore, coincidence or providence that the Protestant Reformation, which began to restore lost scriptural understanding, burst upon Europe in 1517 with the publication of Martin Luther’s *Ninety-Five Theses*? Is it just luck, or the grace of God, that at that very moment in time new lands were being discovered which lay vast distances beyond the rolling Atlantic? Is it only fate, or the patient workings of the Almighty, that the Word of God was being preached and believed *as truth* once again as enormous tracts of wilderness began to beckon and inspire men with the notion that there could be a place where they could walk freely with their Lord, apart from the strictures of an overbearing and empty system of religion? Lastly, was it the inevitable migration of humanity that brought an influx of disparate peoples into the Americas, or could these new lands, or at least a portion of them, have been prepared and set aside by the God of Heaven for a day in which the accuracy of His revealed Word would *once again* live dynamically and powerfully in The Church, and in the hearts and lives of His people? In short, has God reserved a place where His Word can *live again* in the deeds of men as it once did, and, if so, *is America that place*?

These questions and observations will provide the basis of an ongoing column which will look at our spiritual and cultural beginnings. Our goal is to show that present-day American society was originally founded upon the bedrock of God’s Word. While it’s true that the Judeo-Christian basis for our social infrastructure is no longer readily apparent, especially in light of the current permissive pop culture, it is our solemn contention that these same spiritual tenets provide the unseen cohesion that promotes and safeguards an open, orderly, and free society. Without these underlying beliefs and values, our communities are not safe, are children are not adequately educated, our laws are not vigorously enforced, our borders are not secure, and, as a people, we tend to lose our sense of national identity. The result is social fragmentation and national dissolution. Is that the will of God? We think not! We trust in God, Who has opened our eyes, knowing His sons and daughters have a calling to fulfill. Indeed, we are first patriots to Heaven, but the value to God of a land where His Word has free course, and is rightly divided, cannot be overstated. We, thus, invite you to join us, in future issues of the *Clarion*, as we explore, and revel in, our forgotten national heritage.*

(Be sure to look for “GOD And Country” in every summer and winter issue of The Ryburn Christian Clarion. Join us as Rick Heeter, the Clarion’s editor-in-chief, explores the Biblical foundations of The United States Of America.)

(Mr. Rick Heeter has studied God’s Word since 1972, participating in scores of Biblical research classes and seminars over the years. Recently, he was the teacher at the Ryburn Chapel, and for the past two years has served as editor-in-chief and book reviewer for The Ryburn Christian Clarion.)

**Articles and columns submitted to The Ryburn Christian Clarion are edited to ensure correct spelling and punctuation, proper grammar, and clarity of expression.*