



The Ryburn Christian Clarion

BIBLICAL STUDIES RESOURCE

Upholding the Accuracy of the God-Breathed Word

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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 [].

BIBLICAL RESEARCH:

The Logical Approach

BIBLICAL RESEARCH: JUST WHAT is it? For some, the term conjures up images of white-coated scientists, laboring over manuscripts amid sterile surroundings. Others might picture bookish, bespectacled students pouring over crumbling volumes in dusty archives. Still, others may envision archaeologists meticulously cleaning fragile artifacts from some newly discovered dig in the Sinai Desert. All are fascinating notions, but none of them truly convey the essence, or simple logic, of the subject at hand.

What we think of as Biblical research is an outgrowth of the Protestant Reformation. One of the most profound tenets resulting from this major spiritual upheaval is the recognition that the *individual* can have a *personal* and *direct* relationship with the Almighty, without the rituals and mediation of institutionalized worship. Seeking people realized that access to God, through the grace made possible by Jesus Christ, could be theirs, with or without the sanction of organized religion. This new awareness prompted efforts to make the Scriptures available to the common man. Before this, the reading and study of Holy Writ had been reserved almost exclusively for scribes and the clergy. The Reformation changed all that.

Until this time, The Word was transcribed and preached in Latin, a carryover from the Roman period. The *continued on next page...*

INSIDE AT A GLANCE

WITH THIS EDITION, we conclude four remarkable years of outreach. These years saw us grow from a one-page, local newsletter to a Biblical studies resource reaching beyond our national borders. We're ready for the next four.

"BIBLICAL RESEARCH: THE LOGICAL APPROACH" is something we've wanted to share for some time. We live in an era when more people than ever are involved in detailed Biblical study. This is the legacy of the Reformation.

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

"GOD'S MATCHLESS WORD" takes a good look at a term that is frequently used and heard in Christian circles. In **"The Anointing"**, we'll see from The Word what it means to be anointed, especially in New Covenant times.

by Rev. Bob Lindfelt.....3

"FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT" presents our first submission from outside the U. S. **"Paul"**, a fictional portrayal of Timothy and the great apostle, in contemporary English, makes them and their commitment vividly live in our hearts.

by Ellen Fowler.....5

"FROM THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT" ventures into Genesis to dispel some mythologies surrounding our progenitors. In **"Adam: The Working Man"**, we see that the first man had little time to rest under the trees eating fruit all day.

by Keith Jamison, Columnist.....6

"GOD AND COUNTRY": What do you do when the writings you base your life upon are kept from you? How do you react when you find you've been taught ideas that are contrary to these writings? In **"Stirrings In The Church"**, we find our answers.

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

Send comments to ryburnclarion2@sbcglobal.net.

Reformation, though, saw the Bible being rendered in German, English, and other languages. Well before 1517, however, when Martin Luther made his bold stand against corruption in The Church (usually considered the beginning of this movement), men of conscience were already at work to bring the Word of God to the people.

In the 1380s, John Wycliffe and the Lollards rendered in English dozens of handwritten copies of the Scriptures, which they translated from the Latin Vulgate version. Incredibly, to those today who take their freedom to worship for granted, the Middle Ages Church issued an edict to execute anyone possessing the Bible in any language other than Latin. Many were thus burned at the stake for no other reason than owning a Bible printed in their own languages.

It was Johann Gutenberg, and his movable-type printing press, that eventually impelled an explosion of Bible manuscripts in several languages throughout the 1500s. Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament into German in 1522 (and the whole Bible in the 1530s), and William Tyndale's later publishing of the New Testament in English, opened the eyes and hearts of multitudes to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Word, which had been denied to them and supplanted by the weighty trappings of organized religion, began to find its way into the lives of the common people.

As God's Word became available to everyday believers in their own languages, Christians began to recognize the frauds perpetrated by a corrupt, institutionalized religion. The Word of God and the accomplishments of the Lord Jesus remained untarnished but, in practice, the knowledge had been kept from the average congregant through the use of strictures that made the believer subject to a system that denied the very Gospel it claimed to represent. Religious wars and political intrigues became the norm for much of Europe for the next three centuries, while a schism developed throughout Christendom, which remains in place to this very day.

Over the last 180 years or so, a less restrictive social environment has allowed greater access to ancient Biblical manuscripts. Their sheer volume, however, required the science of *textual criticism*, wherein various copies of the Biblical texts are compared with one another in an effort to determine the exact language of the original, God-breathed Word. During this same period, Bible versions flourished, as did the development of study aids such as concordances, lexicons, and Bible dictionaries. Today, we have multiple copies of Biblical texts, and

other related materials, which exist in numerous formats (due to the free market economy in which we live). These things, and the workings of God in the hearts of men, have facilitated a logical extension of textual criticism, namely, *Biblical research*.

Founded upon the premise that *the Bible IS the revealed Word and will of God*, Biblical research seeks to eliminate apparent textual contradictions through the use of a set of clearly-defined study principles. Many of these protocols are commonly used in other disciplines, because they are logical, eliminate errors, promote impartiality, and because they work. The most fundamental of these is that *the Bible is of no private interpretation*, a declaration taken from The Word itself (II Pet. 1:20).

Other practices like paying attention to context; keeping track of who is being spoken to or of; noting who is speaking; identifying the subject matter; observing the time and/or place; and compiling details of a particular incident from varied Biblical accounts allow God's Word to speak for itself. Also, examining the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words employed in the ancient writings allows us to see how our perfect God chose exactly the right words to express truth (Ps. 12:6).

Never before, since the Day of Pentecost, have so many of God's children had the opportunity of studying and, indeed, researching the Scriptures. Having received the "ministry of reconciliation" and the "word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18 and 19), we have a duty, and the right, to unlock and safeguard all that God is trying to express. Like the Bereans of Acts 17:11, who "...received the word with all readiness [or "the greatest eagerness"] of mind..." we must be sure that our endeavors are out of our love for the Father.

The verse in Acts 17 goes on to explain how the Berean saints "...searched the scriptures daily..." The Greek word translated "searched" indicates "careful scrutiny." One rendering declares that they "carefully examined" the Word of God to see if the Apostle Paul knew what he was talking about. In addition, they did this daily, consistently. What an example to follow, and what a challenge!

All that we know of God is by His grace and mercy. He actively chooses to involve Himself in the affairs of His people. He not only redeemed mankind, once and for all, by the Lord Jesus Christ, but He continues to bring us back to that reality throughout the ages as He raises up those who will declare His purposes. Such were men like Wycliffe, Luther, and Tyndale, who, along with nameless others, hazarded their lives that The Word might live.

The Reformation is not a static event that occurred many years ago but, rather, is the continual unfolding of God's Word in both doctrine and practice. The Reformation is going on now, all around us, wherever the sons and daughters of the Almighty learn who they are in Christ, and live that knowledge in the love of God. As we diligently and lovingly study the Bible, let us ever remember the words of Jesus Christ from John 5:39, where He said, "Search the scriptures; for...they are they which testify of me."

As a Biblical studies resource, we, at the *Clarion*, over the past four years, have done our best to honestly handle the Word of God. Our aim, also, has been to present in love a sampling of what God has wrought in Jesus Christ for His children. As such, the Heavenly Father has done much with very little. He has led us to saints who have added to our efforts with pertinent articles that answer basic questions. He has seen to it that we have the financing necessary to carry on this work. Furthermore, He has recently introduced us to

overseas contacts that may open up other countries to this outreach.

In this issue alone, God has blessed us with two special treats. Number one, we are presenting for the first time an article from a saint who lives outside the United States. Ellen Fowler's composition, "Paul", which appears in our "For Your Spiritual Enrichment" column, is a fictional portrayal of a meeting between Timothy and the great apostle. In it, we see the man of God's humanity and strength of character, as seen through Timothy's eyes.

The second treat is an original illustration that accompanies Ms. Fowler's work. Jewel Nichols, a native of Thailand and a beautiful sister in Christ, has, in the *Clarion's* very first illustration, depicted the joyful meeting between Timothy and Paul. It is our prayer that her work will grace our pages on a regular basis. It is further our prayer that you have been blessed by what God has led us to do. May the next four years prove to be even more remarkable, as we make known the greatness of our God.

-----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.)

“ ‘The Anointing’ ”

by Rev. Bob Lindfelt

THERE IS A TERM that many use in Christian circles. "The anointing" represents a wonderful, spiritual reality. As workmen of God's Word (II Tim. 2:15), we want to aspire to do our best in studying the integrity of God's Word for our loving Heavenly Father.

As we read God's Word, we need to realize that the interpretation or understanding of a word or words must be in light of the Author's intent. We must recognize, because we do not have the original, God-breathed Word (only copies), that we need to use the right tools to be proper workmen, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. We must further understand the Bible in light of the vocabulary and grammar of those who wrote it. We should also recognize various forms of expression, including figures of speech and customs of the lands and times mentioned in God's Word. Also, we need to consider the context and to whom a section is addressed, realizing that we have only translations by men. We utilize these tools to understand the Scriptures.

Our quest, in this article, is to understand the Biblical meaning of the word "anoint," or "anointing." It must be a big deal, because David, who was pursued by

King Saul, had the opportunity to slay him but would not, because Saul was "...the LORD's anointed." (I Sam. 24:10 and 26:23) Later, when David was in power, he was God's "anointed." This was very significant for him.

Psalms 18:50

Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

Now, what exactly does "anoint" mean? The Old Testament Hebrew word used the most, *mashach*, means literally, "to smear on." One of the Greek words used in the New Testament, means, "to rub." In the book *Manners And Customs Of The Bible*, by James Freeman, the author comments that anointing was an ancient custom used by the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, as well as other civilizations. A solution, made mostly of olive oil and fragrant, costly spices, would be rubbed on, or poured on, the head or feet of someone. Biblically, it was done at coronations of kings and at the installation of high priests. It was an act of recognizing that the person anointed held a

very special office. Let's see how God used this custom of anointing.

Exodus 28:41 and 30:31

And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them [literally, "fill their hand"], and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me [God] in the priest's office.

And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be ["become"] an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations.

Leviticus 8:12

And he [Moses] poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.

There are two words in the Greek that are of interest. One is *aleipho*, which simply means, "to anoint." The other word is *chrio*, meaning, "to rub."

Mark 6:13

And they cast out many devils, and anointed [aleipho] with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Acts 10:38

How God anointed [chrio] Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

The preceding verse is very significant, for it does not declare that Jesus Christ was anointed with oil, but with "...the Holy Ghost [or "holy spirit"] and with power..." You and I, God's children, are also anointed (*chrio*) with holy spirit and power, which is God's new-birth gift that we received when we were saved. What a wonderful reality it is to know that we are very special in God's eyes! Like Jesus Christ, we, too, can go about "doing good" and healing all that are "...oppressed of the devil...."

II Corinthians 1:21

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed [chrio] us, is God;

This is what Rev. Walter J. Cummins, in his book *A Journey Through The Acts And Epistles*, says about the phrase "hath anointed," from verse 21.

"Hath anointed:" Greek: *chrio* = to anoint. The cognate noun, *christos*, means, "the Christ, the anointed one." This verb form occurs three other times (Acts 4:27; 10:38; Hebrews 1:9), and always with regard to the fact that God anointed Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 1:21 is the only occurrence in which it is used of other people being anointed.

Hence, such anointed people are established in Christ, the anointed one.

The word "Christ," *christos*, means, "the anointed one." According to what we've just read, we, too, are the anointed ones in God's eyes. What a fantastic reality! We are very special to God!

I John 2:20

But ye have an unction [chrio, "anointing"] from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

The word "unction" is the Greek word we are studying, *chrio*. The following verse dynamically portrays the wonderful reality that we have received "the anointing," the gift of holy spirit, which teaches us the truth via the revelation manifestations of word of knowledge, word of wisdom, and discerning of spirits (I Cor. 12:7-10).

I John 2:27

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

The late Dr. George M. Lamsa, a renowned Aramaic scholar, wrote that, "anointing" is used as another word for "ordination," "appointment," or "calling." Prophets and kings were often anointed. On page 308 of his book, *New Testament Light*, regarding I John, he says:

John assures the Christians that their anointing, that is, their calling, or ordination, was sufficient to lead them to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As Jesus Christ was "marked out" to be very special (Rom. 1:4), we are, as well! As He was anointed with holy spirit and power, so are we! As the Lord went about "...doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil..." we can do the same! Even as God was with Jesus Christ, He is with us, also! You and I who are born again are also marked out as very special, and have a significant calling in the Body of Christ, until the Lord returns. Let's rise up to our calling as the anointed of God.*

(Rev. Bob Lindfelt has been involved in Biblical studies and outreach since his days in college. He is presently the director of The San Diego Biblical Studies Fellowship, and has authored a book, entitled Speaking In Tongues: A Biblical Perspective. For additional information, please visit www.sdbiblicalstudies.com.)

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"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;"

II Corinthians 1:21

FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT

Composition

(This column 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, compositions, letters, and other things designed to exhort and comfort God's people.)

"Paul"

by Ellen Fowler

[Editor's Note: *The following composition was first delivered as an oral presentation in March of 1979. It is used here by permission of the author. The accompanying illustration is an original work by Jewel Nichols, rendered specifically for this occasion.]*

YOU ARRIVED IN THE morning. You stood up and waved as soon as you saw us waiting for you by the front door. We ran down to meet you; I beat everyone. Oh, how I had missed you!

"Timothy!" you said, clasping my hands in yours. Your eyes gathered me up like a little child, holding me and warming me. A split second, and the others surrounded us. You looked around, beaming. "It was a rough trip, but, friends, it's great to be back in Ephesus!"

After breakfast, you and I went to work. I asked if you'd like to sleep at all, but you shook your head, smiling. "If I slept, I wouldn't be able to be with you, son. Besides, we've got enough to do to keep us busy this morning, haven't we?"

So, we sat for hours, reviewing finances and planning for special events in the area, and, of course, discussing leadership. Occasionally, your face would grow sad and tired, and at a certain name you'd say no more than, "I don't know," or, "He's gone, Timothy." I wished I could beat every one of their heads in! These men had known you, walked with you, seen your heart. And then you'd say, "I'm glad we're still here, aren't you? And God is here, too. You must never forget that, Timothy."

Later on, we went for a walk. You had worn me out, as usual, but you were so full of life and energy that I could only laugh and follow you, breathless. We came upon a waterfall cascading into a clear pond, and your face lit up like a little child's. "Let's swim, Timothy!" and you peeled off your clothes.

As you stood poised to dive, I saw your back. There were the big, red welts, still puffed up as though you had received them that week. There were the older scars, white now, and smooth, and the pock marks where the whips had sunk in and pulled the flesh away. Every time I saw that back, I saw you, hands tied over your head, reeling under the blows, as the lashes screamed through the air and curled around your body. One man, small and alone, standing bravely for God's Word, against the vast machinery of the entire religious hierarchy of your day.

Tears blurred my eyes, tears for you and for the agony you had undergone. Tears, too, for myself, because

I feared that I would someday face the same lashes, and that I would break rather than stand.



You dove, cutting a graceful arc straight up and then down through the clear water. Laughing, you called, "Come on, Timothy! At the rate you're going, the Lord may return before you hit the water!" But, I waited a moment more, to watch you swim. The sun glinted off your back, and your muscles rippled as you pulled yourself straight and strong through the water. Suddenly, your scars had disappeared; all I could see was the beauty and power of a man making full use of the body God had given him. There was life there, vigor and joy and strength, and the water and sun covered the ugly wounds, and made your back sparkle with light.

So, I thought, with our lives. When we stand on the Word of God, the world is against us. We will be mocked, persecuted, and betrayed. Sometimes our own minds

will reel with condemnation, pressure, strife, and discouragement. If we stop, dismayed, the scars and wounds will swell up and start to throb, but, if we push to live, to love, to run the race that God has called us to, then, God's grace, like sunshine glinting off the water, will cover the scars and stop the pain, and make our lives shine.

I realized that the man I had pictured reeling under the blows of the Jews' lashes was a man with the spirit of God in him, the power that had created the heavens and the earth. Your life would change history, because you had chosen to stand on The Word against all odds. "God is here, too. You must never forget that, Timothy." That's

what you had told me, and I knew that I never would forget. Whether I was beaten, or chained, or thrown in prison, I would stand with you, and stand like you, until I died.

With a shout of triumph, I dove in after you, and we swam together to the opposite shore.*

(Ms. Ellen Fowler discovered God's Word in 1971, and has been studying and sharing it ever since. Her current focus is prayer, learning about it, and doing it. She presently lives in Killaloe, Ireland, where, if you desire, you may contact her by e-mail at efowler33@gmail.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.)

“Adam: The Working Man”

FOR WHAT PURPOSE WAS ADAM put in the Garden of Eden? What was his job; what were his duties? Was he to spend all his time lolling about under the shade of the trees, doing as he pleased? Does the Bible support the commonly held notion of Paradise as a place free of responsibilities, or did Adam have work to do? The Scriptures do not give many details, but we are told in general terms what Adam's job entailed. Let's take a closer look at what God's Word says about this curious matter.

Genesis 2: 15

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress [abad] it and to keep [shamar] it.

Adam's job was to work the Garden. He was to "dress" and to "keep" it. What does it mean to "dress" a garden? The English word "dress" has several definitions, such as, to make or set straight, to clothe, to cover or embellish, to provide with suitable furnishings, to put through a finishing process, and so on. To dress something is to put it in order, properly and completely, whether you're assembling a military formation or topping off a salad. Whether we're setting the stage for a play or getting properly attired for our day, we take many actions to ensure that the things in our lives are "dressed." Likewise, a garden should have proper order. When put and kept in that state, it grows strong, healthy, and beautiful.

The Hebrew word translated "dress," in Genesis 2:15, is *abad*. This word means, "to work." Isn't it interesting that "work" is a topic the Bible addresses even while man was still in Paradise? The first

occurrence of this Hebrew word, however, is in Genesis 2:5b, where the Word of God says, "...*there was not a man to till [abad] the ground.*" Both of these uses occur before man's fall, but *abad* shows up again right after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden. In Genesis 3:23, The Word declares, "Therefore the LORD God sent him [Adam] forth...to till [*abad*] the ground...." Although the same Hebrew word is used before AND after the fall of man, it is certain that the "work" was more difficult afterward. Indeed, God said to Adam, in Genesis 3:18 and 19, that the earth would now yield to him "thorns" and "thistles," and, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,...."

To dress a garden, then, is to "till" or "work" it. Tilling involves more than merely breaking up the soil so you can plant in it. It is also taking care of the soil and plants so they can grow. Although we are not specifically told how Adam was to care for the Garden, we do know that he did not while away the hours in idleness.

Adam was also to "keep" the Garden. Today, this word means, to observe, fulfill, preserve, or maintain. The Hebrew word translated "keep," in Genesis 2:15, is *shamar*. *Shamar* means, "to hedge about, to protect." Hedges can be good, defensive barriers, for they can grow into obstacles that are extremely difficult to cross. For example, during World War II, in the months following the D-Day landings, the Allies battled the Germans in the hedgerow country of Normandy, France. These hedgerows were centuries old, and were well cared for. Being an average of nine feet tall and three feet thick, and in many cases hundreds of feet long, they

proved to be formidable barriers to the Allied advance into the European continent.

Adam was to protect the Garden, to guard it, to hedge it about. He was to see that no harm came to it. The Bible does not state what he was to guard against, but it is likely that he was to protect it from the Adversary, for we know from Genesis 3:1-5, and elsewhere in The Word, that Satan had made an incursion into Eden. In truth, the Devil and the fallen angels under him were the only real threat to that which God had brought forth. In guarding against them, Adam would preserve the Garden.

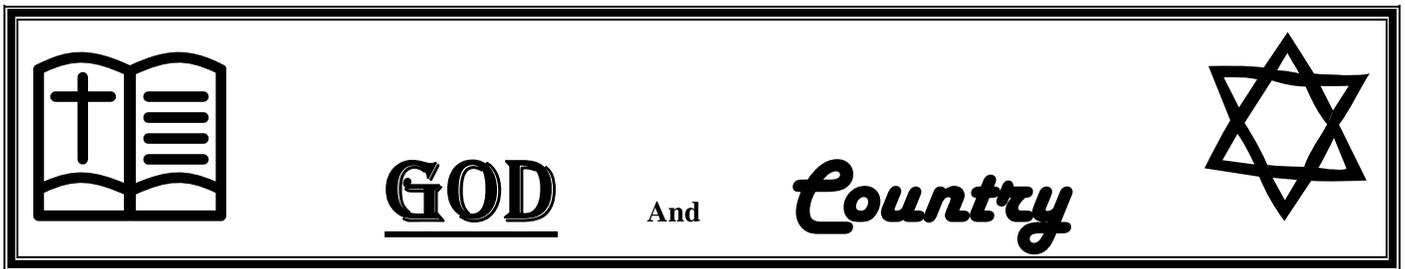
If you want to preserve something, you will protect it. That's why we speak of "keeping," or observing, special days like birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays. It's because we seek to preserve and protect the significance of the event. Preserving the Garden, therefore, seems to be the main point of Genesis 2:15. Why would Adam need to "set straight" that which God brought forth in perfection? Would not God have set the Garden of Eden in order, like He did when He framed the universe? Of course, He did! This means that the "work" Adam did was meant to *maintain* the Garden. He was to keep it in order, to protect and, thus, preserve it. Dressing and keeping the Garden were not separate duties, but one and the same. In working the Garden, Adam was preserving and protecting it. To this end, God gave him dominion over all the earth, and every creature upon it (Gen. 1:26).

There are many other words in the Bible translated "keep." Most serve to differentiate what is being kept, while others emphasize diligent guarding.

For example, *phroureo* is the Greek word used for "shall keep" in Philippians 4:7, where the Scriptures say, the "...peace of God...shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It actually means, "to guard, as with a garrison." It is even rendered as "kept...with a garrison" in II Corinthians 11:32. In the military, a garrison refers to both the guards and the place they are guarding. The garrison protects and preserves what is kept there, or the territory in which it resides. This is interesting, because Philippians 4:7 thus declares that, "...the peace of God..." garrisons (or "shall keep," *phroureo*) our "...hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." By walking in Christ, our hearts and minds are kept safe, protected, in the garrison of God's peace.

No matter the context, to "keep" is to preserve. Whether it's honoring someone on their birthday, fulfilling a promise, or saving for a rainy day, all these examples preserve something. From Adam's caretaking of the Garden of Eden to our Father's peace garrisoning our hearts and minds, God's will is to preserve and protect. By keeping faithful to God, we stay within His protection, and are preserved for His purposes. Thank goodness, His Word has been protected over the centuries, for in it we find *everlasting preservation*.*

(Mr. Keith Jamison has involved himself in Biblical studies for more than fourteen years. Presently, he is the director of The Ryburn Christian Clarion's Research Department. In this capacity, he regularly develops material for the "From The Research Department" and "Investigating Creation Science" columns.)



(In this column, appearing in every summer and winter issue of The Ryburn Christian Clarion, 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.)

“Stirrings In The Church”

by Rick Heeter

THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE followed this column regularly will note almost immediately that we are still dealing with the social and political environment of Middle Ages Europe. You may also remember that we are in the midst of presenting a

brief overview of how the Holy Scriptures came down to us through the ages. This background is necessary to an understanding of the European mindset that was emerging at the start of the Age of Discovery. If we can get a glimpse into the world

view of those whose philosophies would subsequently lay the foundations for our unique, American culture, we will then be able to see how their beliefs, words, and personal exertions have shaped our modern society and, indeed, to some extent, us.

A major assertion set forth regularly in this column is that God is actively involved in the lives of His people, and in the ministry of The Church. Many believe in a distant, disinterested Providence that set up the mechanisms of life long ago, and which, in utter detachment, simply sits back and watches the engine run. We *do not* believe this description fits the God of the Bible, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The God Who brought His people out of Egypt, and cruel bondage; Who gave His Son to rescue mankind from destruction; and Who fills His sons and daughters, in our day and time, with remarkable, spiritual abilities has demonstrated His love in multitudinous ways, and continues to do so. This God did not simply go to sleep or die at the end of the Biblical era, but is living and real and active in the lives of those who love Him. Because of this, America, where God's Word moves unfettered, now exists. Indeed, we are the legacy of those saints who went before us.

This is why a look at pre-Reformation Europe is important, for God, once again, was energizing in the lives of those who were awakening to His call. As men who were responsible for the shepherding of God's people were falling into idolatrous practices, the Lord was seeing to the preservation of His written Word. Sadly, however, the squirreling away of the delicate manuscripts not only kept them safe, but also tragically removed them from the lives of the people who needed their guidance and instruction. This resulted in a gulf that arose between the literate clergy and the so-called laity (a concept that has no clear, Biblical foundation). The largely illiterate congregants were thus reduced to believing whatever they were taught. Furthermore, the division played into the hands of unscrupulous men, who only sought to profit from the ignorance of God's people.

Another practice that excluded the common believer from the Word of God was the adoption, by The Church, of Latin as the official language of the Scriptures, and of the worship service. The spread of God's Word throughout the crumbling Roman Empire, where just about everyone spoke Latin, made a version of the Bible in that universal language a

necessity. In 382 A.D., therefore, Jerome introduced his Latin translation of The Word. By 600 A.D., Latin was the recognized language for all Church ceremonies and religious activities. Eventually, strong intolerance arose against Bible versions in any other language, intolerance that often led to the persecution and, sometimes, the execution of those who dared to violate The Church's edict.

Needless to say, by this time, very little of God's Word was living in the hearts and practices of those who oversaw the affairs of The Church. In fact, much of Christianity had morphed into a pseudo-political monstrosity that was far removed from the Church of God depicted in Holy Writ. Wielding worldly power and influence replaced walking in the love of God; dominating the lives of believers through fear and intimidation supplanted the ministering of God's power and deliverance to lost and hungry souls. Instead of being taught from the Gospel to "stand fast...in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free..." (Gal. 5:1), unwitting saints were psychologically and emotionally shackled to a life of dread, where the flames of eternal torment were an ever present spectre.

In their despair, the souls of men cried out for hope. In desperation, surrounded by an enveloping spiritual and political oppression, the hearts of longing, seeking men and women sought and prayed for deliverance, for light in the darkness, for the tender mercies of the Father, the God Who had never been disclosed to them. In the midst of their daily labors, in the stifling heat of their bed chambers, in the by-ways at twilight, and surrounded by the incense and pomp of ritualized worship their minds and hearts called out for God,...and God, ever faithful to His Word, heard. He heard, and set about to stir the souls of a few seeking ones and, by them, to turn the spiritual tide, and awaken His sleeping children.*

(We invite you to join us in every summer and winter issue of The Ryburn Christian Clarion, as Rick Heeter, the Clarion's editor-in-chief, explores the Judeo-Christian foundations of the United States of America.)

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

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