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"What Child is This?"

by William C. Dix

"When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child."— (Luke 2:17)

The question asked in this well-loved carol must have been uppermost in the minds of those present at Jesus' birth. We can almost hear the question being asked from one to another as they gazed into the humble manger. How difficult it must have been for them to understand that the babe who lay in "such mean estate" was truly the promised Messiah. And through the centuries men have continued to ponder who Christ really is – how can He be fully God and still fully man? Only through divine faith comes the revealed answer.

He who is the Bread of Life began His ministry hungering. He who is the Water of Life ended His ministry thirsty. Christ hungered as man, yet fed the multitudes as God. He was weary, yet He is our rest. He prayed, yet He hears our prayers. He was sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet He redeems sinners. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He is the Good Shepherd. He died, and by dying destroyed death. – Unknown

How beautifully the triumphant answer to this imposing question bursts forth in the refrain – "This, this, is Christ the King."

This thoughtful text was written by **William C. Dix**, one of our finest lay hymn writers. While a successful insurance salesman in Glasgow, Scotland, he was stricken with a sudden serious illness at the age of twenty-nine. Dix was confined to bed for an extended period and suffered deep depression until he called out to God and "met Him in a new and real way." Out of this spiritual experience came many artistic and distinctive hymns, including this delightful carol. It was taken from a longer Christmas poem, "The Manger Throne," written by William Dix about 1865. The melody "Greensleeves" is a traditional English folk tune.

[Information from Amazing Grace, by Kenneth W. Osbeck.]

*What Child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?*

*Why lies He in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear – for sinners here the silent Word is pleading.*

*So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh – come, rich and poor, to own Him;
The King of kings salvation brings – let loving hearts enthrone Him.*

Chorus: *This, this, is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud – the Babe, the Son of Mary.*

FROM THE PASTOR'S HEART

David's Greatest Son

King David was the epitome of a good king to the Jews. There was no king like him before or after in the kingdom of Israel. He was a man after God's own heart whom God granted success to establish Israel as a safe and secure nation. He defeated all his enemies and extended the borders of Israel to the full land borders God promised to Abraham.

After being given great success, David wanted to build a house for God. But God refused his offer, telling him that He would make a house for David instead. God's meaning was a house--a dynasty of kings--after David's death. He promised David:

2 Sam. 7:12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.... 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

This promise to David held amazing blessings for him which none of us have experienced. God promised him that his kingdom would continue forever after he died, that he would have a son yet to be born who would take over his throne, that this son would accomplish David's desires and build a great temple for God, and that God would establish the throne of his son's kingdom forever. How many of us know ahead of time that God will give us a family dynasty, bless our children like this, and protect our possessions and legacy? These are no small blessings promised to David! His prayer of thanksgiving shows how overwhelmed he was (2 Sam. 7:18-29).

But David realized that the idea of a forever kingdom and a forever throne to this son was far beyond promises of just an enduring heritage. So Solomon died after building the temple and His kingdom was divided into two nations by civil war. The northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed completely in 722 B.C. and scattered into the nations. The southern kingdom of Judah was taken captive into Babylon in 587 B. C. There had to be more to David's eternal kingdom and throne than this!

The OT prophets predicted a return from Babylon, a rejoining of the two nations, a great son of David to rule again, and a great temple rebuilt for the worship of God. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all predicted and exalted the coming of this Davidic king.

Judah did return and Ezra and Nehemiah rebuilt the temple in 516 B. C. But up to the time of Christ there was never again a son of David like either Solomon or David. There was never a temple so glorious Solomon's temple rebuilt. And the kingdom of Judah returned from captivity. But living under the rule of the Greeks and the Romans until the time of Jesus, it was reduced to a mere shadow of its Davidic glories. Although the promises of God to David had begun to be fulfilled, they were not yet fulfilled as prophesied.

For 400 years after the close of the OT, the Jews longed for, mourned for, and looked for the coming of the greater son of David--the Anointed one, the Branch of David, the shoot of Jesse--who would free them from the Roman rule, rebuild the temple, bring in the Davidic kingdom prosperity and security again. Tears of hope were shed in prayers for relief.

So, can you imagine the awe and wonder of Mary, a young virgin, when Gabriel announced to her:

30 And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Mary was so filled with wonder and joy that the Davidic hopes and dreams of the prophets were coming true in her virgin womb, that she said:

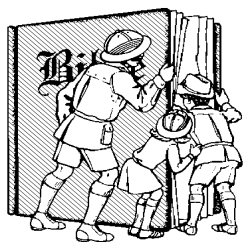
46 And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

If Mary so rejoiced at God's promise fulfilled in David's greater son in her womb, how much more should we rejoice and stand in awe when we see this crucified, risen son of David exalted as King at the right hand of God His eternal Father!

So how did God keep His promise to David? First, the Lord Jesus Christ sits on the eternal throne of David today, ruling the universe as King (Acts 2:30-36). Second, His kingdom is greater than David's because it is eternal in its endurance and its innumerable subjects live forever (John 3:3-5, 16). And, third, His temple is greater than Solomon's or Nehemiah's, for it is made of living breathing stones who are growing into a holy temple of eternal spiritual worship (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:1-10).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is David's greatest son! Let us all rejoice as much as Mary that God has kept His promises to David...and therefore will keep His promises to us (John 5:24).

--Pastor Malone



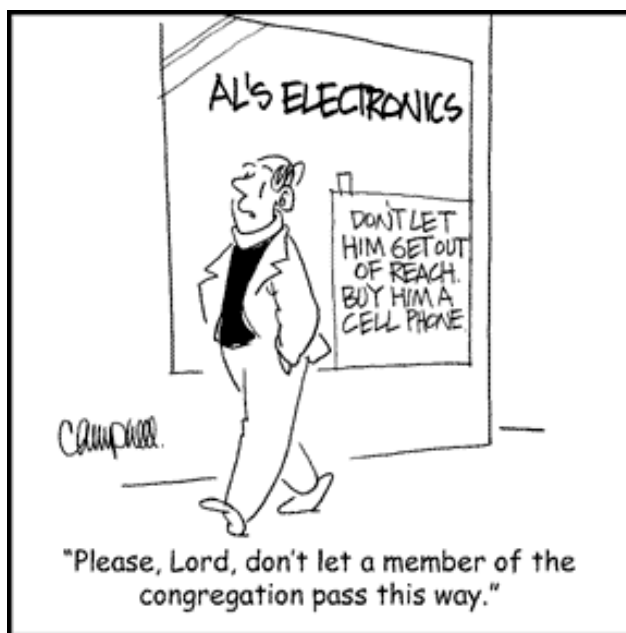
Book Room Review

The Life of God in the Soul of Man

By Henry Scougal

George Whitfield said of this book, "I never new what true religion was till God sent me this excellent treatise." The author, Henry Scougal, sets out to define true religion, saying that those who are acquainted with it "know by experience that true religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the Divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the apostle's phrase, 'it is Christ formed within us.' Briefly, I know not how the nature of true religion can be more fully expressed, than by calling it a divine life: and under these terms I shall discourse of it, showing first how it is called a life, and then how it is termed divine."

[You may purchase this book from our book table for \$5.00.)



"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Proverbs 17:22

Newsbytes and Announcements



Baptisms: Rejoice with us in the recent baptisms of the following youth upon their professions of personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior: Tim Clark, 16 yrs.old; Lydia Johnstone, 14 yrs. old; Kristen Carruth, 17 yrs. old; Enoch Johnstone, 15 yrs. old; and Jarmon King, 18 yrs. old. These represent the answers to many prayers!



Steps to Debt Freedom: The current world economy is squeezing American families with mounting financial pressures. The subprime disaster, declining home values, escalating foreclosures, and inflationary costs of consumer goods – especially gasoline and groceries – place great strains on families. The importance of being debt-free seems to have been grabbing everyone's attention. It's a wake-up call causing many Christians who may have been ignoring God's financial principles to want to get back on track with Him. Here are steps to do just that:

1. First, have a written plan – it's an absolute necessity for anyone in debt – because a written plan (sometimes called a budget) places expenditures in their order of importance. That's crucial because you must establish a point of reference between needs, wants, and desires. **Needs** are purchases necessary to provide basics, such as food, clothing, a job, home, medical coverage, and so on. "If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these." (I Timothy 6:8) **Wants** are decisions involving the quality of goods: designer clothes or lesser, steak vs. hamburger, a new car vs. a used car. A biblical reference point to help determine wants in a Christian's lifestyle is: "Your beauty should not consist in outward things [like] elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothes; instead, [it should consist of] the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very valuable in God's eyes." (I Peter 3:3-4). **Desires** are choices that can be made from surplus funds left only after other obligations have been met. "Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. Because everything that belongs to the world – the lust of the flesh, -- the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's lifestyle – is not from the Father, but is from the world" (I John 2:15-16).
2. Determine what's essential for living. Christians in debt must stop all expenditures not essential for living (see Proverbs 21:17). Cultivate an attitude of conservatism and eliminate expenditures that are not essential. Christians in debt-bondage must stop paying for frivolities. A few years ago, almost all home labor was done by family members – not professionals who charge for it. By developing and utilizing some home skills you can cut down on non-essential expenditures. And, whether in debt or not, it actually might be fun and certainly will help stabilize the family life.
3. Think before you buy. A Christian, whether in debt or not, should think before every purchase (see Proverbs 24:3). Is it a need, a want, or a desire? For example, you can't continue to subscribe to magazines or belong to book, CD, or movie clubs, while you owe others. Don't buy something that devalues quickly or requires costly upkeep, such as swimming pools, boats, sports cars, and so forth. Also, be sure the purchase reflects your Christian values and ethics.
4. Discontinue all credit purchases. Christians in debt should begin to buy on a cash-only basis. Credit cards are convenient, but they can also provide one of the biggest debt traps. Some people actually sell their homes in order to use the equity to pay off credit card debt. That may be a possible solution. However, unless they have worked out a plan to discontinue the use of those troublemaking cards, they'll probably fall right back into the same trap of credit card debt again – and this time without a home.
5. Avoid all forms of leverage when in debt. Leverage is the ability to control a large asset with a relatively small amount of invested capital. Current housing foreclosures are an obvious signal that engaging in leveraging can become a catastrophic practice. Borrowing money to invest can be disastrous, because if no profit is made and you can't make the payments, the investment is lost and you'll still owe the lender. The current economic climate illustrates that – for an individual or a multi-billion dollar financial institution – leveraging is a form of gambling that has left a lot of folks holding an empty bag.
6. Finally, practice saving money on a regular basis, even if you're in debt. You may be only able to put away \$5 a month, but develop a discipline of saving. This does not mean that you should store up a large amount of money while failing to pay your creditors. But, one of the best habits you can develop is to save something – even a small amount – on a regular basis. Everyone is capable of saving some money, but many fail to do so because they think that the small amount they can save is meaningless. Others believe that God frowns on a Christian saving anything. Neither of these reasons is scriptural, because: "Precious treasure and oil are in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man consumes them" (Proverbs 21:20). [By Howard Dayton, co-founder of Crown Financial Ministries and the current host of Crown's radio program, "Money Matters." Dayton and the late Larry Burkett joined forces in 2000 when Crown Ministries, led by Dayton, merged with Christian Financial Concepts, led by Burkett. Crown Financial Ministries is on the web at www.crown.org.]



ARBCA Missionary Focus

ARBCA-sponsored chaplain serves on Marine base – Patrick and Rhonda Joyner

Patrick and Rhonda Joyner both had the privilege of growing up in Christian homes. They met at church in Memphis, Tennessee, while Rhonda was finishing her graduate studies.

While in college, Patrick sensed a call into the military and was selected into the submarine and nuclear power officer program in 1987. After graduation from college and the two year nuclear power training, he served onboard three submarines. Since submarines do not have chaplains, Patrick had the opportunity to lead worship services while under way. This led to a sense of call to serve as a Navy chaplain. So he completed a six-year commitment to the Navy in 1993, graduated from seminary in 1999 and was called to pastor First Baptist Church of Green Forest, Arkansas. After two years of working toward reformation in this church, Patrick was able to enter the Navy as a chaplain.

Patrick has served as a Navy chaplain to the Marine Air Control Group at Cherry Point, N.C.; Destroyer Squadron 26 and the Operational Ministry Center in Norfolk, VA; and is currently serving as the Second Recruit Training Battalion chaplain in Parris Island, S.C.

Patrick's sending church is Providence Baptist Church in Suffolk, VA., where Pastor Rob Stovall ministers.

The Joyner family includes seven children: William 15; Audrey, 13; Jordan, 13; Maggie 10; Noah 8; LaurelAnna, 4; and Mary M'Cheyne, 2.

Patrick can be reached by e-mail at patrick.s.joyner@usmc.mil.

Early in the 20th century, Howard Bliss, a missionary to Syria, wrote an article about what Christ can mean to anyone who would take Him seriously. Consider these insights:

Call on Christ

*Does Christ save you from you sin?
Call Him Savior!*

*Does Christ free you from the slavery of your passions?
Call Him Redeemer!*

*Does Christ teach you as no one else has taught you?
Call Him Teacher!*

*Does Christ mold you and master your life?
Call Him Master!*

*Does Christ shine upon the pathway that is dark to you?
Call Him Guide!*

*Does Christ reveal God to you?
Call Him the Son of God!*

*Does Christ reveal ideal manhood to you?
Call Him the Son of Man!*