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Surviving the New Year

Jim Beattie

Recently I stood gazing over the lake at Erie Beach in Southern Ontario. It was a cold, stormy day with strong winds throwing waves against rocks and directing spray from the surf against the lake side of cottages along the beach. With the biting cold and wind, it was not a great day to be outside.

Just then I noticed a row of about forty ducks riding the waves. Naturally, I don't know what they were thinking. But as I watched them through my binoculars, I sensed no distress. In the turbulent crests and troughs, they appeared to be parading along unperturbed.

We know, of course, that they are equipped for these conditions. God has given them a capacity for an environment we are not capable of handling.

But then I thought of the year ahead. We have no idea what storms we will have to endure in the coming days or what kind of environment we will find ourselves in. And my thoughts turned to people I am acquainted with who have faced extremely adverse conditions in the year that just ended. And they survived amazingly well!

In some cases the difference can be attributed to their close relationship with God. Apparently God sustained them in the harsh weather they faced. Some have weathered storms well beyond what I would have thought possible.

A quiet confidence and an overriding recognition that behind all adversity, God was at work brought them a certain restfulness of spirit.

In Psalm 107, we are reminded that no matter what comes, the Lord's unseen hand is operating behind it all to achieve what is for our ultimate good.

Five times the writer punctuates this psalm with the refrain: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

In each of the five sections there is a description of the terrifying conditions through which people were passing. But in the end, The Lord "... makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven" (Psalm 107:29-30).

And what God did centuries ago when the Psalmist penned his observations, He still can do now if we will just trust Him.

Wave after wave might come crashing around us in 2016. Our only refuge from the storm is God Himself. May we have such confidence in Him for whatever comes that we might be able to say like the people in Isaiah's day: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid" (Isaiah 12:2).

When unerring Wisdom, Infinite love, Omnipotent power continue, the confiding heart may enjoy unruffled repose. Unless we can find some circumstance too big or too little for the Almighty God, we have no proper base on which to found a single anxious thought

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Shepherds and the Sheep, pt. 2

Joel Portman

God's Shepherd Care of Individuals in the Old Testament

As a shepherd cares for his flock of many, even hundreds, of sheep, he is also very aware of the needs of each one. They are all important to him, and all are dependent on his knowledge and care for them. Examples of this shepherd care of Jehovah for His people encourage us, and His care in the Old Testament helps us to appreciate what He is doing for us. It also gives us a pattern that present under-shepherds should seek to emulate.

Jehovah's Shepherd Care for Jacob, Genesis 48

There are two distinct references to Jehovah as a shepherd in relation to individuals in the Old Testament. One is with reference to Jacob in Genesis 48:15-16 ("fed" is same word as "shepherd".) Jacob, looking back at his long life, willingly acknowledged Jehovah's continual shepherd care all of his days, despite his own failures and expressions of self-will. We learn a few lessons about the work of shepherds from his simple statement: One is that he realized that it his own determining well was not the cause of his care and prosperity. It was the overshadowing presence and power of God that had brought this to pass. Realizing the providential care of the Lord always makes one aware that all blessings, protection, provision have not resulted from our own personal abilities or provisions, regardless of what they might be. In back of every event and supply of our needs has been the kind and merciful hand of God to supply and provide. He properly receives the honor of recognition as a result, and we are humbled in His presence.

We note that God's care had continued without interruption all of his many days, nearly 120 years at this point. He had been unfaithful, had wandered, was involved in acts that were not according to the Lord's will, and had dishonored the Name of His God by his behavior. God's shepherd care had not failed during that

time; it did not depend on Jacob's faithfulness, but on God's faithfulness. We might, at times, think that when we get away in heart and fail in life, then God is not interested in caring for us or supplying what we need. This is a normal reaction, but it is wrong. God's determination to bless His people and provide for them doesn't depend on our worthiness. It results from His desire for His own that He expresses in His determination to fulfill His role faithfully. An important lesson from this for us is that our care for those who have been entrusted to us should not depend on how they respond or how they behave. That kind of attitude and action is easy, but it is not like God's shepherd care. They belong to the Lord, therefore, we are responsible to seek to minister to them as He grants grace to do so.

We notice that the word is "fed". This indicates that God had given a constant supply that had upheld him by strength-giving nourishment along the way. A great function of 'God-like' shepherds is that they are able and exercised to feed God's people. Our Lord's word to Peter in John 21 is to "feed" my sheep, and we learn from 1 Timothy 3 that one of an elder's responsibilities is to be capable of teaching. This may be either publicly or privately, perhaps, but both are necessary and the Lord's people need both. They need to be fed! We might think, or say, that they should be feeding for themselves in God's Word, but feeding the sheep by loving, even correcting, teaching is essential. This is a special need among those who are young in the faith, and this work should not depend entirely on what is spoken publicly in assembly meetings. Men, who visit the saints to try to teach by giving a word privately, are necessary and should be appreciated.

When we think of all the troubles that Jacob had encountered in his many years, we can appreciate how he could reflect on God's deliverance in his many afflictions. Speaking to his wives prior to leaving Laban's service, he related to them how the Lord had been with him in all those difficulties (Genesis 31:5). Hebrews 13:5-6 says that every believer may say that "for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. . .the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

He is the same One now as He was in the past; "I will be with you alway (all the days,) even unto the end of the world (age)" (Matthew 28:20). Paul said to the elders from Ephesus in Acts 20:18, "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." This should characterize a true shepherd of spiritual sheep; they are with the saints and know their condition, their needs, and they are able to support and sympathize with them at all times.

Jehovah's Shepherd Care for David, Psalm 23

This psalm has been a comfort to believers for countless years, and surely it will be for many years to come. It has been a balm for troubled souls, an encouragement for discouraged hearts, and source of security for those in difficulties. There is no doubt that David experienced the reality of the Lord's tender care as "my Shepherd" many times in his life, and he had proved the reality of that confidence in Jehovah that was never misplaced. Who could be a better, more tender or capable shepherd of His people than the One who purchased them at great cost, so that all who know Him may truly say, "The LORD is MY Shepherd"?

Let us look at a few characteristics of this shepherd care that our blessed Lord still exercises toward His beloved people.

His Personal Relationship with His Sheep, v 1

David, like us, could say "The LORD is MY shepherd." A personal relationship has been established between the great Shepherd and the sheep that depends, not on us, but rather on the certainty of His purpose and the purchase price that He paid for the sheep. Those who care for sheep verify what the Lord said in John 10:4, 14, 27, that the sheep know the shepherd's voice and they respond to him. Sheep will not follow another, such as a stranger (John 10:5), nor is a hireling dependable (10:12). The one who has bought them and who has proven himself to have care for them is the one that they know and trust.

What David could say can be repeated by each of us today. He was not always "my" shepherd, but we recall the time when the

purchase price that He paid for us was made our own experience, and we entered into this intimate relationship with Him. We have learned to trust Him, not only for our salvation, but also for our preservation and for His constant, caring ability to supply the needs of His sheep. That relationship is based on stated fact, but it is also developed by experience. We have learned that He is always faithful to His Word and merciful to His people. We have proved that we can confide in Him without reserve, knowing that His desire is always good toward His own.

The same characteristic relationship should exist between a spiritual shepherd in an assembly and those who are trusting him for care and help. One can occupy a position and exercise authority, but confidence and trust is gained, so that the believer knows in whom they can confide and be assured that what is revealed will be kept in confidence. They know who has a personal care for their spiritual, physical and emotional welfare, and they gravitate toward them. These are those who love the believer, because they belong to the Lord and caring for them is a work done to that great shepherd as well. These men are not distant, not self-occupied, nor too busy to attend to the saints' needs. One has said that the sheep always know their shepherd, and that is true for us as well. How good to be able to say, with regard to an "under-shepherd", "he is my shepherd and I trust him. He cares for me".

His Loving Care for His Sheep, v 2-4

That brings us to the next point of the psalm; David says, "I shall lack nothing" (lit. trans.) The remainder of this psalm expands the various ways in which those every needs are supplied by the shepherd. It is essential that a natural shepherd know the needs of the sheep. He must examine the pasture land to make sure that there is nothing poisonous in it. He will be aware of their need for water, for rest, for care, for guarding from their enemies. It is not to supply all that they might want in a wide sense, as if whatever one might desire, he will meet it. Rather it is that in his care, the sheep will lack nothing that is beneficial for them.

Those who care for sheep tell us that the sheep that are well-cared for are healthier,

stronger, mature earlier, and produce more offspring than those who are left to fend for themselves. This psalm tell us of the ways our Shepherd does this; rest in green pastures, quiet waters of refreshment, or waters of rest, restoration when needed, and leading in proper pathways of life. It is through providing the comfort of his own presence in the difficulties of life whether in sickness, depression, or nearing death. He promised His presence with us continually, and we sense that care at times when the need is greatest. The rod gives security, to know that the shepherd is defending his sheep from all enemies, and the staff assures them of his wise guidance. We need all of this, and as in the natural realm, the sheep cannot provide it for themselves, so we thank God that we have a Shepherd who is fully aware of what we need and who will supply it.

The saints in an assembly need similar care by those who are responsible for them. And those men will do everything possible to express that care for the Lord's dear people, so that they are well-nourished and supplied with all that they need. It is not the mark of a true shepherd to relax in the comfort of his own home when there is a believer who has a need. It is not the characteristic of true shepherds not to have proper spiritual food prepared to nourish the saints when they are gathered together, or in private. It requires wisdom, grace, spiritual exercise, and a willingness to sacrifice of one's own time and energy to do so, but it is most needed today.

His Abundant Provision for His Sheep, v 5

This Shepherd's provision goes far beyond meeting the basic necessities of the sheep. He provides, as a gracious host, a feast for them to enjoy, and it is without regard to the envious and greedy gaze of predators that lurk in the area. "The table" suggests an abundant provision out of the riches of His ability. We are reminded of the "table of the Lord" in 1 Corinthians 10:21, which seems to suggest the full expanse of His provision for us. Ephesians 1:3 tells us that He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" so that we can truly say, "I have no lack". Our Lord is not a "stingy" provider, and His care and

kindness far exceeds that of Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7, who invited the Lord to eat, but there is no mention of a feast, nor water for His feet, nor oil for His head. And most certainly, under the circumstances of Simon's provision, His cup didn't run over, although the woman, a sinner, who entered the house, brought much joy to His heart. The father provided for the returning son in Luke 15, a feast that made his elder brother envious, but it was the full expression of his loving heart. Our heavenly Shepherd does no less and much more! Even though His people are surrounded by their foes, all of whom would want to deprive them of their bounty, He richly supplies regardless. But even our daily material provisions are from His gracious hand. We see in 1 Timothy 4:5, that our daily food is "sanctified by the word of God and prayer". Does this not suggest that a believer recognizes that his daily food has come from God, so that it is set apart from being simply the mundane food of life. The Lord told His disciples that they should pray, "Give us this day our daily bread", so we see beyond the food to the kind hand of God to supply.

He has set the standard and given a pattern for all shepherds, and this work isn't limited to elders of an assembly. That work is most important among God's people, all who whom need nourishment and encouragement in their lives. However, in an assembly, the elders are called upon by our Great Shepherd to fulfill this function. Peter (who had received this commission from the Lord in John 20), exhorts elders among the saints to "Feed the flock of God which is among you" (1 Peter 5:2), and again, this word indicates the full sphere of shepherd care and provision for God's people.

His Certain Promise for His Sheep, v 6

Jehovah's care for David wasn't limited to the "here and now". He could anticipate the joy of dwelling in His house forever, or all the days. As long as life shall last and into eternity, our heavenly Shepherd goes far beyond what David experienced. We thank God that we are "kept guarded by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5 JND) and will be supplied to the end of days.

Such promises from the One who is "My Shepherd" give assurance and confidence as we go forward in life. We enter a New Year with

paths untrod and experiences yet anticipated. None of us know what the days will bring. No one can predict what lies ahead, but our safety and supply is in the hands of the One who died for His sheep and who cares for them continually.

Even those who have a clear sense of their stewardship before God, as regards many other matters, do not grasp it very clearly as regards time. Many think little or nothing of wasted hours and days. Whole mornings, afternoons, and evenings frittered away cause them no trouble of conscience at all. Very many who would never willingly waste their money, waste their time without a thought.

Wonder of the Book, pt. 3

Dyson Hague, M. A.

The Wonder of its Preservation

Another wonderful thing about the Bible is that it is almost the only book in the world that has stood ages of ferocious and incessant persecution. Century after century men have tried to burn it and to bury it. Crusade after Crusade has been organized to extirpate it. Kings of the earth set themselves, and rulers of the church took counsel together to destroy it from off the face of the earth. Diocletian, the Roman Emperor, in 303, inaugurated the most terrific onslaught that the world has known upon a book. Every Bible almost was destroyed, myriads of Christians perished, and a column of triumph was erected over an exterminated Bible with the inscription: "Extincto nomine Christianorum" (The name of the Christians has been extinguished). And yet, not many years after, the Bible came forth, as Noah from the ark, to re-people the earth, and in the year 325, Constantine enthroned the Bible as the Infallible Judge of Truth in the first General Council. Then followed the prolonged persecution of medievalism. You all know how the Church of Rome denied the Scriptures to the people. The Church of Rome never trusted the people with the Bible. For ages it was practically an unknown

book. Even Luther was a grown-up man when he said that he had never seen a Bible in his life. No jailer ever kept a prisoner closer than the Church of Rome has kept the Bible from the people. Not only so. In consequence of Edicts of Councils, and bans and bulls of Popes, Bibles were burned, and Bible readers sent by the Inquisition to rack and flame. Many of us have seen the very spot in old London where baskets full of English Testaments were burned with great display by the order of Rome. Yet perhaps the worst persecution of all has been during the last one hundred and fifty years. The bitterest foes of, the Bible, curiously enough, were men who claimed liberty of thought and Bolingbroke and Hume and Voltaire seemed so confident of the extermination of the Bible, that the Frenchman declared that a hundred years after his day not a Bible would be found save as an antiquarian curiosity. Then came the German rationalistic host, with the fiercest and deadliest of all the attacks. Baur and Strauss and the Tubingen School took up the cry of the Children of Edom: "Down with it, down with it, even to the ground." But He that sitteth in His silent heaven laughed, and Jehovah had them in derision. For here it is today, and stronger than ever. It stands, and it will stand. The adversaries have done their worst. They have charged their heaviest charge. They have fired their deadliest volley. Whatever unexpected adversaries appear in the future, no more destructive trios than Julian and Celsus and Porphyry, than Voltaire and Strauss and Renan, than Eichborn, Wellhausen and Kuenen, will ever be confederate against it. Yet in spite of these age-long persecutions the Word of the Lord is having free course and is being glorified. It is being circulated at the rate of about twenty-five million copies a year, in over five hundred languages of the globe. It has an influence it never possessed before. Verily, as we think of it we may challenge our proud age with the challenge of Moses, and cry: "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?" (Deuteronomy 4:32)

But before I close I would like to briefly refer to five other things that are to my mind the crowning wonders of the Book.

Its Self-Authenticatingness

There is, first of all, what we might call its self-authenticatingness. You need no historical critic or university professor to prove that the Bible is God's own Word. The Holy Ghost alone is the Author and Giver of that conviction. If you will but hear the accents of His voice you will be assured beyond all possibility of argument that this book is God's own Word. Men have come and still come to unsettle and destroy. The Spirit of Christ comes to validate and confirm with a Divine conviction and a Divine certainty that is incommunicable by mere reason, and is impervious to the assaults of doubt. You have perhaps heard Spurgeon's famous story of the poor woman who was confronted by a modern agnostic, and asked: "What are you reading?" "I am reading the Word of God." "The Word of God? Who told you that?" "He told me so Himself." "Told you so? Why, how can you prove that?" Looking skyward, the poor soul said: "Can you prove to me that there is a sun up in the sky?" "Why, of course; the best proof is that it warms me, and I can see its light." "That's it!" was her joyous reply. "The best proof that this Book is the Word of God is that it warms and lights my soul." (Read 1 Corinthians 2:12). You cannot explain this. But it is a fact deep and real.

Its Inexhaustibility

Another wonder of the Bible is its inexhaustibility. It is like a seed. You can tell how many acorns are on an oak, but you cannot tell how many oaks are in an acorn. The tree that grows from a seed produces in turn the seeds of other trees; each tree contains a thousand seeds; each seed the germ of a thousand trees. Its depth is infinite; its height is infinite. Millions of readers and writers, age after age, have dug in this unfathomable mine, and its depths are still unexhausted. Age after age it has generated, with ever-increasing creative power, ideas and plans, and schemes, and themes, and books. Yes, books; and in many cases books that are the only literature of the nation. The greatest minds have been its expositors. Myriads of

students have studied it daily, and its readers from day to day can be numbered by millions. The volumes that have been written on single chapters or even verses would fill the shelves of many a library, and today they are as fresh, as fertile, as inexhaustible, as the day they were first written. The treasures yet to be found are as the stars of the sky in infinity of multitude.

Its Non-improvableness

Another wonder is its non-improvableness. You cannot gild gold. You cannot paint rubies. You cannot brighten diamonds. And no artist can touch with final touch this finished Word of God. This proud-pinnacled -century can add nothing to it. It stands as the sun in the sky. If the greatest Bible-lovers of the last century, like Irving, and Gladstone, and Spurgeon, and Parker, had attempted to improve it their work would have been a patch and a disfigurement. It has the glory of God.

Its Authoritativeness

Its irresistible authoritativeness. This is another wonder. It breaks upon you as a Voice from Heaven. Five hundred times in the Pentateuch it prefaces or concludes its declarations with the sublime assertions, "The Lord said," or "The Lord spake"! Three hundred times again in the following books it does the same, and in the prophetic, twelve hundred times with such expressions as: "Hear the Word of the Lord," or, "Thus saith the Lord." No other book dares thus to address itself to the universal conscience of man as man. No other speaks with such binding claim, or presumes to command the obedience of mankind. While all the books of the Bible are not equal in grandeur of revelation or of spiritual value, or ethical importance, there is throughout an equality of inspiration and finality of authoritativeness. The strange thing is that men in every age and clime acknowledge it. They know that the book speaks to their inner consciousness with an authority like the authority of God Himself.

Its Perennial Re-Inspiration

Another wonder is what might be called its perpetual re-inspiration. Men think of the Bible as a book that was inspired. But the wonder of

the Bible is that it is inspired. From the far-distant heights of time it comes sweeping into the hearts of man to-day, and the same breath of God that breathed into it its mystic life makes it live and energize again to-day. It is the Living Word, vital with the life of the Living God who gave it and gives it living power. The Twenty-third Psalm was inspired, but again and again to-day, as it is whispered in the hush of the death-chamber, or read with the hidden cry, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold the wondrous things of Thy law," it is re-inspired, and the Spirit makes it live once more. For this is the most remarkable and unique feature of the Bible. I feel that it is mine. Its promises are mine. As I read the one hundred and third Psalm, it is not ancient Hebrew, it is present-day power; and I, a living soul, over-whelmed with gratitude, cry out: "Bless the Lord, O my soul." The other day I took up this dear old Bible that my mother gave me, and I noted a verse in Genesis with a date written on the margin. There floated back upon my mind a time, some years ago, when I was in great trouble. I had to leave my dear wife and children, and to travel in quest of health in 'distant lands; and my heart within me was sad, and one day opening my Bible, at random as men say, my eye caught these words in Gen. 28-15: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land." Shall I ever forget the flash of comfort that swept over my soul as I read that verse! All the exegetes and critics in the world could ever persuade my soul that that was a mere echo of some far-off relic of a Babylonian legend, or of an Oriental myth. No, no! That was a message to me, It came straight down to me. It swept into my soul as a Voice from Heaven. It lifted me up, and no man will ever shake me out of the conviction that that message that day was God's own Word to me, inspiring because inspired inspired because inspiring.

Its Christ-fullness

But the final wonder of the Book is Christ. He is its fulness, its centre, its fascination. It is all about Jesus! Old Testament and New Testament alike tell of Jesus, the great fullness fact of history, the great Force of history, the great

Future of history; for of this Book it can be said: "The Glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof." And as long as men live upon the face of this globe the Book that tells of that Supreme Personality, the Centre of a world's desire, Jesus; Jesus, the arch of the span of history, the key-stone of the arch of prophecy; Jesus, the Revealed, the Redeeming, the Risen, the Reigning, the Returning Lord; Jesus, the Desire of all nations; so long will this Book draw men's hearts like a magnet, and men will stand by it, and live for it, and die for it.

The Last Word

And as I close, let me say this one word more. Oh, do not think and do not say, as I have heard men say they think, that we ought to read this Book as we read any other book; we ought to study it and analyze it just as we do any textbook in literature or science. No, no ! When you come to this Book, come to it with awe. Read it with reverence. Regard it with a most sacred attention. "Take thy shoes from off thy feet, for the ground where-on thou standest is holy ground." Never, never compare this Book with other books. Comparison is dangerous. They are of earth. This is from heaven. O, do not think and do not say that this Book only 'contains the word of God! It is the Word of God. Think not of it as a good book, or even the better book, but lift it in heart and mind and faith and love far, far above all, and ever regard it, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God; nay more, as the living Word of the Living God: supernatural in origin; eternal in duration; inexpressible in value; infinite in scope; divine in authorship; human in penmanship ; regenerative in power; infallible in authority; universal in interest; personal in application; inspired in totality.

Turning from God to Man, pt. 3

Robert Surgenor

The World's Mold of Pragmatism

The term pragmatism sounds innocent for it means the spirit of practicality and problem solving. There is nothing wrong in being practi-

cal and having the wisdom to solve problems. However, pragmatism is dangerous because it is unconcerned with principles like goodness, truth, and justice. The pragmatist says that questions about ultimate truth and goodness are not practical. "What works?" is the question of the pragmatist.

Pragmatism is seen in politicians who won't do the right thing because it is an election year. Their solutions are short term in spite of later crippling effects. As long as they can hoodwink their constituents into getting into office, nothing else matters. Pragmatism is government economists driving down inflation with short term tax cuts and inflated money supplies with no concern for the present crippling deficit. Hitler was pragmatic in solving the Jewish "problem" by the Holocaust.

President Obama used pragmatism in hoodwinking the American public into thinking that under his Obamacare plan, people could choose their own doctor. He knew otherwise, but lied to the American people in order to get his legislation passed. It worked, to the dismay of the victims.

The greatest pragmatist of all time is the Devil, who artfully blinds the minds of his victims into thinking that the world holds all that they need to be happy

Pragmatism is using modern techniques such as advertising, and entertainment instead of biblical preaching and teaching to build the size of one's church. It advocates putting every biblical teaching that offends in a box and closing the lid. Political correctness dominates the pulpit. Worldly schemes are devised to rake in the money for the coffers of the church, all in the name of Christ. Entertainment of all sorts are introduced to keep congregations happy and content, while salvation truths are carefully avoided, lest they offend, and drive people away. Many churches have degenerated into social clubs, entertaining their congregations on the way to hell.

The World's Mold of Hedonism

In the 4th century BC, the Cyrenaics of Greece had a philosophy of hedonism. They believed that man's ultimate purpose was to be found in enjoying pleasure and avoiding pain. This philosophy was elevated to a religion. The wor-

shippers of Dionysius would get release from the normal restraints of life by drunkenness and sexual involvement with temple prostitutes. The Epicureans were a more sophisticated variety of hedonist. They valued exquisite taste in the choice of the finest wines and foods. They valued pleasure without excess.

Falling America has become very hedonistic. Modern corporations are selling their wares, especially to the young, with a hedonistic world view. Many people are finding happiness in chemicals. Drugs are king in many lives. Our sexual revolution is rooted in hedonism. "If it feels good, it is good!" Promiscuity is becoming the norm.

Many young couples see nothing wrong in having sexual relationships outside of marriage. They feel that if it feels good it can't be wrong. Their behavior is based on feeling and intuition, not the forthright, objective teaching of God's Word that forbids all sexual relations outside of marriage.

St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) was a hedonist before he was converted. He penned this famous prayer, "O Lord ... Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." He saw the root of man's restlessness. We were created for God. "What is the chief end of man?" The Westminster Catechism answers; "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." The Christian's goal is God. They understand that we were created for joy, happiness, and peace, to be only found in Christ, not hedonism.

The World's Mold of Neo-paganism

Paganism is a condition that exists where the Gospel has never been preached. It is belief in false polytheistic religions. America is becoming what might be called a neo-pagan nation. The morality and ethics of Christianity were once commonly held in the West. Today, as the West rejects Christianity the old gods are coming back. Over 100 years ago a German Jew, Heinrich Heine, saw the sickness of neo-paganism coming. He wrote, "Should that subduing talisman, the cross, ever break, then the old stone gods will rise from the long-forgotten ruins and rub the dust of a thousand years from their eyes, and Thor, leaping to life with his

giant hammer, will crush the Gothic cathedrals."

The numbers are increasing where so called nominal Christians are embracing Celtic and Norse paganism, witchcraft, Voodooism, American Indian shamanism, and nature goddess religions. Yoga has become popular to many professing Christians, but little do they realize that the Yoga exercise program is subtly pushing them into Buddhism. My primary care physician is an Irish Roman Catholic. We are friends. One day he told me that he was a Buddhist. He also assured me that he was still a Roman Catholic. I said to him, "Before becoming a Buddhist, you attend Yoga classes, didn't you?" That surprised him, and he answered and said, "Yes, how did you ever know?" I told him that Yoga was a subtle door to Buddhism.

Neopagans are deeply committed to environmental causes. Their gods embody nature, and animal rights. Thus we have "tree huggers" and the like today. Some actually have more love and affection to a tree than to a human being.

Professing Christians have been known to attend seminars on New Age thought. Neopagan and New Age thought is unified in its rejection of the Christ of the Bible. His true deity and atoning sacrifice are denied. He is reduced to being an enlightened master; he is a god just as we are all gods in human form.

The Bible asserts that Christ is the unique Son of God (John 1:14, 18). There is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus claimed to be the only way to God (John 14:6).

The World's Mold of Antichristianity

God warns His own; "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18).

Anti-Christian groups cry out for separation of church and state, but that is never mentioned in the constitution. The founding fathers wanted to keep the state out of the church, not the church out of the state. If they had, do you think they would have had church services in congress and the supreme court? This happened until after the Civil War. At the

beginning of our country congress had days of fasting and prayer. During the Revolutionary War congress ordered 20,000 Bibles to be bought from foreign countries when the supply was cut off by England because of the war. From the beginning, congress started each session with prayer and still does to this day. A lot of textbooks had biblical passages and history in them.

When I was a child, our school teacher daily opened the class with prayer. A passage from the Bible was read. That is outlawed in our school system today. In fact, thirty years ago my grandson was reprimanded for bringing his little bible to school. The public school system seems to be quite willing to provide special rooms for Muslim children to pray, yet outlaw any Christian activity on their property. There has been a removing of any reference to God in textbooks and historical sites. Atheist Michael Newdow, in his relentless pursuit of a Godless America, continues to seek court approval to remove all vestiges of Christianity from the public places. His latest petitions sought to have "under God" removed from our Pledge of Allegiance, our national motto, "In God We Trust" removed from our currency, and the words, "...so help me God," removed from our presidential oath. Fortunately, the courts denied the petitions. Nevertheless, this antagonistic attitude toward Christianity is fermenting like yeast and growing in America.

Many groups are forming that are deeply intolerant towards the Christian religion. Their objectives are to silence Christians and to remove all public displays of Christian heritage and faith in America.

Because of anti-Christian bigotry, private business owners have been sued and forced to close their business. Families and businesses that express a Christian worldview on social issues often face vicious retaliation from bigoted anti-Christian zealots.

Some members or supporters of these groups have committed violent crimes against Christians and faith-based groups. Physical and profane verbal assaults against Christians are methods frequently exercised in their angry methods of intimidation. In a Gay parade in California, an elderly Christian lady stood on the sidelines holding up a cross. The Gay pa-

raders were so enraged over the sight of her cross, that they tore it from her hands, ripped it apart, and then mercilessly beat her to the ground, almost taking her life. Yet these vile sinners cry out demanding tolerance! What warped minds and desperately wicked hearts!

G. K. Chesterton has observed how Christianity is today attacked "on all sides and for all contradictory reasons." Some condemn Christianity for being too pessimistic, others for being too optimistic. Christianity is attacked by some for stressing sin, judgment, and austerity, and for being inhuman and bleak; others reject it for its pie-in-the-sky comforts. The followers of Karl Marx charge Christianity with suppressing the poor; the followers of Ayn Rand condemn Christianity for helping them. In a history class a professor blames Christianity that Edward the Confessor was mild and ineffective; yet he blames Richard the Lion Hearted for being warlike. A science teacher will snipe at Christianity for suppressing modern knowledge in the name of outdated superstition; down the hall an anthropology professor will attack missionaries for introducing modern technology and health care to primitive cultures. This attitude is not new. The Lord in the Gospel of Matthew 11:18-19 states; "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." In other words, no matter what action is taken, it is wrong.

"The fashion (its manner of life) of this world passeth away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17).

Yes, this "age" is passing away, but Christians belong to the "age to come." What a tragedy for a Christian to conform to this perishing world. As another has said, "What madness it is to join in this puppet show which is displayed on a tottering stage."

To be content with present things is true wisdom; Who arranged, appointed, and sent them? Was it not our God, His infinite wisdom and love? And could things be arranged better than they are? Pride thinks they may, and says, "No."

The Light Thereof

Rev. 21:23

I pause outside Heaven's pearl gate
And seek a glimpse therein
And as I linger here and wait
It fades— Earth's ceaseless din.

If like the apostle, who of old
Was made to see the sight—
His eyes beheld the street of gold
And saw the Lamb— the Light;

May I but gain a fleeting view
As swings that gate again
To open for some saint anew
The path to Heaven's plain.

The glory of that blest abode
Illumes the way I plod,
And lifts my heart, along the road
That leads my soul to God.

Celestial chords spill on my ears
And make my soul to soar.
They draw again my lonely tears.
I long for Heaven's shore.

My moments here are bittersweet—
I grieve to see one go.
But no— I would not stay their feet
Who're called to Heaven's glow.

They've left the toiling of the way.
They've gained their rest above.
They're basking in eternal day,
In oceans of His love.

O! Let me linger here a while
And gain a glimpse therein
And wean my heart from Earth's sly smile
To fellowship with Him.

My time spent here is more, and good;
Ah; so it is of late—
I'd linger all the hours I could
Just outside Heaven's gate.