

# *Forerunner*

**Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God**

Volume 14, Number 9

November 2005



France Burns—  
WHERE NEXT?

# November 2005 Contents

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## About Our Cover



A car, set afire by young Muslim rioters, burns behind police in a Paris suburb on November 3, 2005. France's recent violence—erupting along the fault line between traditional European culture and Islamic culture—could easily spread to other nations of Europe, as similar conditions exist. Will Europe be able to find a solution to this volatile situation?

**Reuters**

## Forerunner Magazine

Editor-in-Chief  
JOHN W. RITENBAUGH

Associate Editor  
MARTIN G. COLLINS

News Editor  
DAVID C. GRABBE

Contributing Writers  
MARK BAKER, TED E. BOWLING, JOHN F. BULHAROWSKI, CARL CHILDS, CLYDE FINKLEA,  
MIKE FORD, RONNY H. GRAHAM, WILLIAM GRAY, PAT HIGGINS, BILL KEESEE,  
ROD KEESEE, WARREN LEE, DAVID F. MAAS, BRYAN NELSON, JOHN PLUNKETT,  
JOHN REID, MARK SCHINDLER, CHARLES WHITAKER, BRIAN WULF

Proofreaders  
PHYLLIS FORD, CINDY HINDS, DIANE MCIVER, JOHN PLUNKETT

Managing Editor  
RICHARD T. RITENBAUGH

Graphic and Layout Editor  
KRISTEN M. COLLINS

Circulation  
DIANE R. MCIVER

## Contact Church of the Great God

PO Box 471846  
Charlotte, NC 28247-1846  
U.S.A.

No. 13 Mt. Daho  
Amityville  
Rodriguez, Rizal 1860  
THE PHILIPPINES

Box 30188  
Saanich Centre Postal Outlet  
Victoria, BC V8X 5E1  
CANADA

(803) 802-7075 / (803) 802-7811 fax  
<http://www.cgg.org> or <http://www.sabbath.org>  
or <http://www.bibletools.org> or <http://www.theborean.org>

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# Be There Next Year

Paul writes in Romans 5:12-14:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. . . .

In one broad stroke, Paul provides a major reason why this world is the way it is. Death reigns, and mankind, in bondage to Satan and this world, is cut off from God. Sin, introduced to the world by Adam and Eve and practiced by all mankind since, is the cause. We must not excuse ourselves by saying we have just been caught up in the effect of others' sins, but we must admit that we have kept sin's flame burning.

Occasionally, I have stated that the relationship with God, established by our justification through Christ's sacrifice, *is* salvation. This is a

generalization because a number of specific elements are required for salvation, but it is essentially true since that relationship provides the means for receiving the spiritual strength to fight the battles of faith and to overcome and grow. Through this relationship, we are able to leave Babylon and bring glory to God.

Unbeknownst to us until God's calling and conversion, Babylon occupied our time and attention. It is exceedingly attractive to human nature because it has been created by Satan; it draws like a magnet. In one sense, it is all we knew since birth, and we willingly gave ourselves over to it, allowing it to shape our attitudes and character.

The members of God's church have just returned from another Feast of Tabernacles. Though the Feast is usually a wearying experience, we usually return spiritually energized. As the Feast ends, we have high hopes and resolve to give ourselves zealously to overcoming. To accomplish this, we must pursue a second general principle, which will simultaneously ensure that we are present at next year's Feast.

## *The Only Matrix for Salvation*

What we must do is to take advantage of our access to God, through which we have a relationship with Him, while at the same time diligently seeking Him. Both of the generali-

ties mentioned so far are true statements because the relationship we have with God provides the only matrix for salvation. A *matrix* is an environment in which a thing is

developed. An almost perfect synonym for a matrix is “womb.” If we have no access to God, there can be no relationship with Him, who is the source of everything needed for salvation. Our relationship with God is the spiritual womb in which we are being created to become like Him and share in His glory.

A simple word picture can illustrate this truth. When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in the environment He had designed to enhance their further spiritual development, the Garden of Eden. In the Garden were the Two Trees. In this environment, Adam and Eve were to have a relationship with God, aided by the Tree of Life, of which they were invited to partake freely. Instead, under temptation, they took of the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and were expelled from the Garden. The relationship ended.

An angel with a flaming sword was placed to guard the entrance to the Garden, so that there could be no doubt that the relationship with God had ended. To emphasize this fact, the Bible is clear that Adam and Eve died without being readmitted. Without access to God and the Tree of Life, their spiritual development came to a crashing halt. Adam and Eve represented all of mankind, and God judged that all who followed would endlessly repeat what they had done, even though they would not sin in exactly the same way.

His judgment was, of course, correct. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Thus, all have been cut off from God through sin. Knowing that all of Adam and Eve’s progeny would sin, God provided a means by which they could reestablish a relationship with Him, even though the environment for the relationship would not be the Garden of Eden.

What, then, is our present position? Since the Garden of Eden no longer exists, but we nonetheless

have access to God, we spiritually stand at a crossroads, which forces us to choose the direction of our lives. In fact, it requires two clear-cut choices that we may have to repeat a number of times during our conversion due to the inconsistency of our character.

The first choice is obvious: We must choose whether we will go in the direction of God’s way or continue in the ways of the world. Deuteronomy 30:19 proposes this clearly: “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” This is virtually an exact copy of the choice God set before Adam and Eve in the Two Trees.

The second choice is whether we will develop the relationship with God zealously or merely casually. Here are the alternatives:

- To make little or no effort and likely become swept away and reabsorbed into the world and the ways we know so well and feel comfortable with, or
- To strive against the natural flow of this world and the current of our carnal inclinations, seeking resolutely and consistently to strengthen the relationship that God opened to us.

The latter is truly seeking God. It is not a matter of looking for God as if to find Him, but endeavoring to be like Him. The apostle Paul illustrates his example in I Corinthians 9:26-27: “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Thus, we now have access to the Father and the Tree of Life, and we have a relationship to build upon, which gives us every opportunity to go on to everlasting life. God has willed, though, that our development into His image must take place within this world.

Part of God’s solution clears us of guilt for past sins, the act known as *justification*. Justification by

## Moving Beyond Justification

We are commanded to live by faith, to come out of Babylon, and to choose life. We cannot stay neutral in this issue. We either seek God fervently or possibly die the second death. The means of opening this choice to us is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1-2, 8 proclaims:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. . . . But God

faith in Christ's blood is only a partial solution to the salvation issue and to coming out of Babylon because it changes neither the nature nor the character that are the foundational reasons justification through Christ's blood is necessary. It does clear one of indebtedness due to sin, and that in itself is a major blessing, an enormous gift.

By itself, it does not change the behavior that is responsible for us being indebted in the first place. Yet, it does open the door to that change, which is why Romans 5:10 says, "We shall be saved by His life." Help for us to change is available because Christ is our *living* High Priest. Help for us to come out of Babylon and to be at next year's Feast is available because He is alive to assist us.

Notice that verse 2 says, "... we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the *hope* of the glory of God." Having access to God *should* lead to everlasting life. Most assuredly it can, but only if we make the effort to fulfill our part of the New Covenant.

Hebrews 5:14–6:1 adds clarity to the fact that we must move on from justification:

But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God.

These verses clearly state that one must go on from a beginning to full maturity and the ability to discern good and evil. The step that follows justification the Bible calls *sanctification*, during which the Christian, by means of his relationship with God, goes on to "perfection." Zealously following through in this process will bring a person to this state. The zeal is an element the Christian must supply.

## Seeking God in Babylon

God is not in the business of saving people just for the sake of saving them. He is saving humanity *and* creating His character in them. Our responsibility in this process of becoming one with God is to seek Him with all our heart.

The prophet Amos cries out to the Israelites of his day, "Seek the LORD and live" (Amos 5:6), and in verse 14, he proclaims, "Seek good and not evil, that you may live." In Jeremiah 29:12-13, God prophesies to Israel in a time of desperate trouble: "Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

Seeking God is accomplished by means of combining basic elements: frequent daily prayer, Bible study, meditating on the practical applications, occasional fasting, and perhaps above all, applying what we learn in humble, submissive obedience. Humbly and faithfully doing these will work to convert us from conforming to this world to conforming to God and His way, but doing them takes sacrifice to accomplish (see Romans 12:1-2). The process of sanctification is greatly supported, indeed driven, by gratitude for the gifts already given, the hope of promises fulfilled, and the desire to please and glorify God.

In the light of these things, the appealing but dangerous allurements of Babylon and Laodiceanism become seen for what they are. They are an ever-

present reality attracting and diverting our attention from seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Because of God's calling, our priorities in life have changed.

In a striking word picture, Revelation 17:2 describes the effect of people's relationship with Babylon: "... with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." Those caught up in Babylon become spiritually drunk, a result of imbibing its way of life.

Wine has significant spiritual meaning. Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker," meaning that it initially has a pleasant, lifting, energizing effect, but it is a deception. Its secondary effect is depressive, ensnaring those who allow themselves too much. In other words, it makes one drunk. The mind of a person under its influence becomes dizzy, fuzzy, and unfocused; his perception of reality becomes distorted and uncertain. His body staggers under the effect of the drug; it does not react as the drinker commands it to act. At the same time, he is lured into thinking that he actually has greater powers than he had before becoming influenced. The reality is that he has lost control and become dangerous to himself and others.

"Wine" in this illustration is Babylon's way of life, and "fornication" figuratively portrays faith-

lessness, such as one would experience within a covenant relationship like a marriage. In Revelation 18:3, God adds “wrath” to the “wine of her

fornication,” including the penalties that descend on its hapless victims as they practice sins of unfaithfulness to God.

## Spiritual Drunkenness

Hosea 4:11-12 declares: “Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God.” A major key to understanding the application of both Hosea and Amos to us is that both prophets prophesied in Israel, the ten northern tribes, in an era similar to that in which we live, that is, in a last generation before a major national calamity. In their case, it was just before the people of Israel fell to the invading Assyrian armies, were removed from their homeland, and scattered to the four winds, never to return.

Historical records and archeological findings show that Israel was quite prosperous at the time, a major power in the world. Simultaneously, the nation was morally rotten to the core, and social injustice was the order of the day throughout the land. The Israelites of that time were literally getting drunk, as Amos reports them drinking wine by the bowlful (Amos 6:6). Yet a far more spiritual drunkenness guided their conduct. In addition, they practiced the ritual harlotry of the pagan religions they had adopted.

However, the lesson for us is spiritual. God is saying that at the end time, it will be as if a demonic power has seized the nation, destroying loyalty to God in a spiritual drunken frenzy, during which the people will think themselves totally in control.

Even as drugs destroy a person’s capacity to think clearly, break down resistance to evil, and so becloud the mind that he becomes morally stupid, so does the spiritual drunkenness that results from a person allowing himself to drink in this world’s ways. Escape into the fantasies of this world’s attitudes and conduct deprives a person of his understanding, removes inhibitions, inspires

false confidence—even bravado, plays havoc with modesty and restraint, and destroys loyalty within relationships.

The prophet writes in Hosea 10:1-2:

Israel empties his vine [*is an empty vine*, KJV]; he brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the bounty of his land they have embellished his sacred pillars. Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty. He will break down their altars; He will ruin their sacred pillars.

Hosea exposes the problem between God and Israel. He describes Israel as a luxuriant grape vine sending runners in every direction, indicating a bountiful crop. It indeed produces great material prosperity, but it is consumed through self-indulgent gorging. This is God’s way of showing that Israel abused its prosperity: It used its prosperity for the purposes of idolatry. Its prosperity played a part in corrupting the Israelites’ hearts, which is why Hosea mentions the divided or disloyal heart in context with its bountiful fruit.

A large part of this world’s appeal is its offer of financial security. However, God shows there is a possible harmful, secondary effect: As people become financially secure, their attention is diverted from His purpose to vain and unimportant things. In other words, prosperity turns people’s heads. There is no doubt that prosperity is good, but unless one is properly focused and disciplined, it can also be a demanding master because of its power to distract one into idolatry. Recall God’s prophecy in Deuteronomy 32:15, predicting that when Israel prospered, then it would rebel.

## Laodiceanism and a Divided Heart

This connects with the curse of Laodiceanism because God shows in them what can happen spiritually as people increase materially. Because such people are drunk through riches’ deceptive promise, their judgment is in danger of being radically altered. The Laodicean evaluates himself, saying, “I am rich,

have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” (Revelation 3:17).

He is deceived into thinking that his material prosperity proves that God approves of his conduct and attitudes. His overall conduct may not be too

(continued on page 16)

*“Go to the ant, you sluggard!”*

**Proverbs 6:6**

# Tamerlane's Ant

**In the fourteenth century**, a man called Tamerlane rose from the breeding ground of conquerors, Central Asia. He had many titles, including Conqueror of the Earth and Lord of the Sun. He swept across Asia and Europe, conquering, raping, pillaging, and erecting huge mounds of human skulls to mark his passage.

Nevertheless, early in his rise to power, he was routed in battle by a powerful enemy. Tamerlane himself lay hidden in a deserted building while the enemy searched for him. As he hid, dejected and desperate to escape, he noticed an ant carrying a kernel of corn. He watched this ant try to carry the grain, which was much larger than herself, up and over a wall. Repeatedly, the weight proved too much, and the ant fell back. Undeterred, the ant would load up and begin her climb all over again.

Tamerlane began to count the attempts. Sixty-nine times the little ant fell back. On the seventieth try, she was able to push the piece of corn over the top. Tamerlane was so inspired by this display of perseverance that he was able to regroup his army and put the enemy to flight. So the story goes.

Another story tells a similar tale, though in a

negative vein: Once upon a time, there were four men named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. An important job needed to be done, and Everybody was asked to do it. But Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about it, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, and Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody, and Nobody did the job that Anybody could have done in the first place.

What is the point of these two stories? We can begin to answer this question in Proverbs 6:6-8: “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.”

Tamerlane watched that ant struggle to carry a kernel of corn over a wall and came away so inspired that he went on to conquer much of the known world! Could Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody have used some inspiration from the ant? Apparently so. A job that Anybody could have done was ignored by Everybody, causing Nobody to do the job, and Somebody got blamed!

"Go to the ant, you sluggard!"

## Initiative

What Tamerlane's ant had, and these four Bodies lacked, was *initiative*, "the power or ability to begin or follow through on a plan or task." A person with enterprise and determination is said to have initiative. *Roget's Thesaurus* describes it as "an eagerness to do something." Some synonyms are "ambition," "drive," "dynamism," "energy," "get-up-and-go," "gumption," "inventiveness," "leadership," "resourcefulness," and "vigor."

Do any of these words describe us? Should they? Do any of them describe Christ? Of course they do! Christ's ambition is to have us in the God Family. He has drive, dynamism, energy, leadership, and so on. How about other influences in our lives, such as Herbert Armstrong? Not a single person, in or out of the church, would disagree that Herbert Armstrong personified initiative.

So, again, do any of these words describe us? Should they? Yes, indeed. Is our ambition to be in the Kingdom of God? Will it take drive, dynamism, and energy to pray, to study, to fast, to do all the things a Christian must do to grow in character and in his relationship with God? The answer to these questions is, again, yes.

"In all labor there is profit,  
but idle chatter  
leads only to poverty."

*Proverbs 14:23*

What about success on a physical level, in our jobs and marriages? Initiative is needful here as well. In just about every human endeavor, initiative is necessary in being successful and reaching one's goals.

In Proverbs 14:23, Solomon warns "In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty." We have all known coworkers like this, who spend too much time in the break room or around the water

cooler. They make a career out of keeping themselves from work, and commandeering anyone they can to listen to them.

The book of Proverbs is full of similar verses, exhorting us to work

"The plans of the diligent  
lead surely to plenty,  
but those of everyone who is hasty,  
surely to poverty."

*Proverbs 21:5*

hard and to avoid laziness. However, our work is to be focused; we are to work intelligently. Proverbs 21:5 supports this point: "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty." Recall that one definition of *initiative* is an "eagerness to do something." Yet, it is important that this "something" be part of an overall plan. In other words, the hole one is digging should have a purpose, and we should know what it is.

Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky once wrote that one could utterly crush a man by giving him work of a completely senseless, irrational nature. Thus, whether it is pushing a wheelbarrow or studying for a degree, we should have a good idea what the point of our

in mind that *initiative* is "an eagerness to do something," and some of its synonyms are "ambition," "drive," "dynamism," "energy," "inventiveness," "leadership," and "resourcefulness." We should examine our lives

to see if we can add any of these traits, or if we already have them, to improve on them. It makes no difference if our job is temporary laborer or Bank President, student or housewife—we need to show initiative.

Ants, being insects, have six legs, and each leg has three joints. They can run very quickly for their size. Ants are also quite strong, lifting twenty times their body weight. An ant's brain has about 250,000 brain cells, while a human brain has 10 million cells or forty times more. For its size, an ant packs a fair amount of brain power.

An ant's average life expectancy is 45-60 days. It has antennae, which it uses, not only for touching, but also for smelling. It has two stomachs: One holds the food for itself, and the second stomach holds food to be shared with other ants.

There are many thousands of different ant species, and many types of ant mounds. Some species build simple mounds out of dirt or sand, while others use small sticks mixed with dirt to make a stronger mound. Western Harvester ants make a small mound on top, but then tunnel 15 feet straight down!

Ant mounds consist of many chambers connected by tunnels. Different chambers are used for nurseries, food storage, and even resting places for the worker ants. A single ant colony can include over five million members. Each ant colony has at least one queen, as well as sterile

## The Life of Ants

We can illustrate the concept of initiative by using the example of ants. While we review some of the habits of these insects, please keep



female workers and males.

The sole job of the queen is to lay eggs, which the worker ants look after. She is a busy queen, laying up to two million eggs a month. She needs to mate only once in her lifetime to be able to produce eggs for at least 15 years!

Worker ants look for food, look after the young, and defend the nest. If a worker ant finds a good source of food, it leaves a trail of scent so that the other ants in the colony can find the food as well. At night, the worker ants move the eggs and larvae deep into the nest to protect them from the cold. During the day, they move them back to the top of the nest so they can be warmer. Unbeknownst to many, ants are very clean and tidy. Some worker ants are tasked with taking out the trash to special dumps outside the colony.

For any of us men who need a little humbling—probably all of us—dwell on this: Male ants serve only one purpose, to mate with future queen ants. Once they have carried out this purpose, they do not live very long.

Solomon advises, “Consider [the ant’s] ways, and be wise.” What can we learn from this brief overview of an ant’s life?

## Lessons to Learn

**E**ven though the colony has a “queen,” she is more of an egg factory than a ruler. Ants do not have a leader, yet God designed them to be efficient and organized. Unlike ants, human beings need leadership, but we can use their example in developing initiative.

Ants have a sort of language with which they communicate with one another, and each colony member has a task. No ants are hanging out at the entrance to a cubicle, coffee cup in hand, keeping another from her work with a long-winded story. No ants are complaining that the “loading dock is no place for someone with my talent.” Each ant has a

job, and she does it. Individual ants see the tasks that need to be done, and they do them without being told. For anyone who runs a business or manages others, this is a simply stunning concept.

Ants carry on complex social organizations, building projects, and communications, all without leadership! They can do this, perhaps, because they are not out for themselves. Each ant is concerned only with the health and well-being of the colony. Most of us have probably kicked an ant mound and watched the thousands, if not millions, of ants rush out to defend the colony. Did we ever see any ants running the other way, trying to save their own lives? Of course not. Their innate focus is on serving the colony and maintaining its welfare.

anything productive, it is cause for celebration!

We have probably all spent long periods watching ants go about their work, and it is a sure bet that we have never seen a lazy one. Are there any road-worker ants? That is, five ants watching one ant with a shovel? Of course not. No one told Tamerlane’s ant to carry the grain of corn back to the colony. Most likely, the colony needed food, and the job of this particular ant was to forage for it. The idea of *not* doing her job was alien to this ant.

How we apply these examples to our own lives is up to us. However, the thought of *not* praying or studying each day should be alien to us. The possibility of us *not* doing our tasks well should never cross our minds, nor the minds of our employ-

“Do you see a man  
who excels in his work?  
He will stand before kings.”

*Proverbs 22:29*

Too many times, in human society, when someone shows initiative, he is shot down. Years ago, I was in a rental store to pick up a piece of equipment, and in line ahead of me were two county employees, a supervisor and a new employee. The clerk brought around the pressure washer they had rented, and the new guy started to walk off with it. His boss said, very sharply, “What do you think you’re doing?” The new man replied he was just going to put it in the truck. The supervisor said, “You just slow down! We have all day to do this job.” In other words, if they finished early, they would be assigned more work to do, and they could not have that!

Ants do not have these problems. They do not become jealous or suspect the motives of others—they just do their jobs. For many Americans, the very fact that they show up for work, in their minds, entitles them to a paycheck. If they actually *do*

ers. Whatever gifts God has given us, we should be eager to use them. Whatever our position in life, we should have ambition, drive, dynamism, energy, get-up-and-go, inventiveness, leadership, and resourcefulness. In short, initiative.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God.” “Seek first” implies effort, striving towards a goal. It supposes a plan and a set of priorities. In addition, it is a directive to us individually from our Lord and Master. No one else will do our job for us! We will not ride the coattails of anyone into God’s Kingdom.

Finally, in Proverbs 22:29, God tells us through Solomon, “Do you see a man who excels in his work [who shows initiative]? He will stand before kings.” Will we allow the example of an ant to show us the way to initiative and the rewards it can bring?

—Mike Ford

# The Zeitgeist

## Part Four: A Soup

***“The time has come,” the Walrus said,  
“To speak of many things:  
Of gold—and oil—and souls of men—  
Of frankincense—and slaves—  
And why the faith of men is not—  
And whether folk are knaves.”***

**Adapted by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson  
from *Through the Looking Glass***

Part Three of this series focused on some of the steps economists have urged governments to take to resolve the crisis in national pension programs. The principal cause of this crisis is an increasingly unmanageable disparity between the vast number of Baby Boomers retiring in the next few years and the relatively small number of young people replacing them in the workplace. This gap in the numbers of workers and retirees is the result of steadily decreasing fertility rates during the last thirty years.

Moreover, this gap is not just academic, but one that threatens the viability of the modern welfare state, since it is young workers who, through their taxes, foot the bill for most entitlement programs. Commonly proposed economic solutions to the problem miss the mark because they aim at fixing symptoms, not causes. The solutions do nothing to reverse the widespread low fertility rates responsible for today's pension imbroglio.

This final article will look at yet another solution to problems caused by sub-replacement fertility rates. This is a radical technological solution fraught with dangers for everyone.

### **Progress and Choice: Babylon's Worldview**

Have you ever wondered what is *really* behind the seemingly inordinate interest in genome mapping, genetic engineering, stem-cell research, and related

matters? They get a lot of press today. Biotechnologists, in their rare moments of candor and honesty—when they are not issuing wild promises to cure everyone of everything—talk about the potential to generate millions of dollars over the years through stem-cell research. In speaking of dollars, they are hitting the nail on its head. *Profit* is the reason biotechnology firms are so interested in garnering research funding.

In 2004, they conned California voters into funding stem-cell research to the tune of \$3 billion, promising that these selfsame voters would be the ultimate beneficiaries through better health. Voters in New York, Maryland, and Connecticut—blue (liberal) states all—are also considering coughing up cold cash in support of stem-cell research.<sup>1</sup> Why would biotech firms and governments be willing to invest multiple billions for mere millions in return? This is not a sensible return-on-investment. Entrepreneurial math does not work that way.

In fact, biotech firms are chasing a *trillion* dollar market. To grasp that fact, we need to understand how they see the world. What is their worldview?

The leaders of this present, evil world (Galatians 1:4) are not blind to the numbers behind the new demography. They are greatly aware of the irrefutable trendlines showing falling fertility rates in modern nations. Further, they believe that the driving forces behind these lower rates are implicitly, probably inextricably, built into our urbanized, industrialized culture. They have come to look at that culture much as they look at physical life: as the result of mindless, unrelenting evolution yielding increasingly better results. They conclude that industrialization (and all that comes with it) is natural, is permanent, and will unstoppably march around the world. So falling trendlines do not represent temporary dips in fertility, but a long-term dive. They will continue to fall, yielding compounding results, as long as the cultures of the planet are configured around industrialization.

To state it a bit differently: Barring a meteorological or seismic catastrophe, the elite movers and shakers of East and West hold that the causes of

# st of Suicide

## Tureen of Trouble

lower fertility rates—industrialization, urbanization, consumerist capitalism, secularism,<sup>2</sup> self-determination (democracy), and technology—are part of modernity. Hence, they conclude that the downward trend in birthrates is both irreversible and permanent. In other words, modern society is locked on a course toward its own self-destruction.

This is the paradox built into the evolutionary worldview.

Supporting this worldview are two deeply Masonic doctrines that have lain at the heart of the Western *zeitgeist* since at least the Enlightenment: progress and individualism. Albert Pike's<sup>3</sup> statement, "Progress is the normal condition of man," encapsulates the approach moderns take toward society. Giuseppe Mazzini, a nineteenth-century Italian patriot, offers the same sentiment: "The moral law of the universe is progress." An American author of the same century, William Simms, concurs: "The true law of the race is progress and development." Both Mazzini and Simms connect progress with law, even moral law—as if progress were the eleventh commandment.

Progress has led inescapably to the second great Masonic doctrine,<sup>4</sup> the elevation of the individual over God, family, and community. This idea, exaltation of self over *everything*, is best stated by Francis Monfort, an American preacher: "The great political controversy of the ages has reached its end in the recognition of the individual." The controversy was in fact as much social as political, involving the most important and intimate decisions people make.

### The Reign of Choice

Once, a person's family, driven by cultural norms, made his decisions. A young woman's parents, for instance, chose her lifelong mate. She had little or no choice. Culture mandated that her "vocation" be homemaking, full stop. Her husband's choices were also heavily circumscribed and conditioned by culture: His marriage was arranged and more often than not, his work was that of his father. How many small businesses called "Smith & Sons" have existed

over the centuries? In societies characterized by caste and class, even clothing, lifestyle, and residence were not a matter of individual choice.

Today, that has all changed in the Western and Westernizing worlds. Rare is the son who enters his father's line of work. Arranged marriage is a cultural artifact practiced only in the most traditional of societies. Secular humanism has exalted choice: choice of vocation, of mate, of lifestyle, of residence.

In the context of the present discussion, individualism means the "valorization of choice in reproductive matters."<sup>5</sup> If a couple (yes, it still takes two people to make a child!) determines to sex-select, so as to control the gender of their unborn child, that decision is a matter of choice, protected almost as a sacrosanct "right."<sup>6</sup> In our world where tolerance and moral relativism are norms, the couple's preference is considered neutral—neither right nor wrong. If another couple wishes to use contraceptives, even post-coital ones (that is, the "morning after" pill), this decision too is a matter of private prerogative. If yet another couple (or a woman acting alone, even an underage one) desires to abort a child, the doctrine of free choice dictates that there be no hindrance.

Finally, if a couple determines not to have children, who has the authority to question their decision? Is it not a private matter, outside the purview of morality, and hence not subject to public debate? Who dares point out God's authoritative command that the man and woman multiply (Genesis 1:28)? God, the progressive individualist claims, was certainly not justified in slaying Onan for refusing to reproduce, as Genesis 38:8-10 testifies He did.

It is by no means apparent to the builders of our civilization that society should—or even can—question the values of progress and individualism. Yet, their predilections for those dual values leave them with a conundrum. If pro-family and pro-natal policies fly in the face of evolution and the eminence of free choice, how will civilization avert dissolution from mass (albeit gradual) suicide? Put differently: If God's teaching that reproduction is a positive good

violates the sensibilities of today's elite, how are they to ensure a steady output of young workers to support their crowning creation, the industrialized-secularized-consumerist, cradle-to-grave welfare state?

## Technology to the Rescue

To resolve this problem, today's policymakers look to technology. This is where biotechnology enters the picture. If the problem is too few young workers to sustain the welfare state, the solution is to *make* babies. It is precisely in this "solution" that the biotech firms' enormous return-on-investment lies. That is why they are spending billions of dollars on genetic and stem-cell research. They are responding to the call of a very lucrative market indeed, potentially a trillion-dollar baby business. If couples will not produce children who will grow up to be workers supporting the welfare colossus, baby factories will.

Technology is not quite there yet. However, the gap between wishing and implementation is fast closing. For example, the well-intentioned fight (mounted by the March-of-Dimes folk) to save the lives of premature children has led to the development, at least in prototype, of an artificial womb.<sup>7</sup> It will probably be rolled out for use before the end of this decade.<sup>8</sup> Biotechnology firms are learning how to modify cells genetically, how to breed for strength or intelligence—whatever the labor market may one day need.

Operationally, these firms will probably at first buy sperm and eggs from people and bring children to term in machines. As time goes on, the firms will likely develop huge banks of sperm and eggs, to be mixed and matched at will in their machines.

These "machines," the artificial wombs, are in fact warm soup tureens, the soup being a simulation of the liquids in natural wombs and in the lungs of fetuses. We will call the offspring of these machines "soup kids," SKs for short.

The artificial fabrication of humans will support a number of the cosmopolitan elite's goals. Here are two of the more important ones:

- *The modern welfare state will be saved.* Babies can be produced in numbers, bred for strength and health, educated for the workplace, and tasked to produce goods and to pay taxes in support of the welfare state. The economic system God's people term "Babylon" can keep going, buoyed by SKs. The problems caused by falling fertility rates can be resolved before economic paralysis sets in.
- *Radical feminism will be spared embarrassment.* Should the economic crisis caused by the birth-dearth become deep and lingering

enough, society will call feminism into account, putting decided pressure on women to leave the workplace and bear children. The *en masse* synthetic production of individuals in laboratories will forestall any such backlash indefinitely. Women will be free to pursue careers and economic parity with men, without having to "encumber" their lives with childbearing and child-raising.<sup>9</sup>

Is this all an impossible scenario? Not any more than the invention of the iPod, the commonplace deployment of cell phones, or the legalization of same-sex marriage, the last still in its incipient stage. Artificial insemination (the modern term is "assisted reproduction") in a number of forms is already widely practiced. Once artificial gestation becomes technologically feasible and genetic engineering reliable, the liberal establishment will use the media it controls to mold society to accept the "machining" of human beings, just as those same culture-of-death liberals are currently massaging society to accept infanticide in the name of full-term abortions.<sup>10</sup> The elites will argue that SK workers will ensure continued industrial and agricultural productivity and generate tax revenues in an era of irreversibly declining natural fertility. In short, SKs will allow "the system" to progress; the secularism, feminism, and welfarism of modern culture can "mature" unabated.

## Baby Futures?

The implications of such a radical development are almost beyond imagination.

First, and probably foremost, *babies will become a commodity*.<sup>11</sup> Biotech corporations, responding to governmental and corporate "purchase orders," will produce the required number of soup-boys and soup-girls each month. Because some will die before maturity and because of the long "tail" between conception and entry into the workplace at, say, 16, in all likelihood something like a "futures market"<sup>12</sup> in SKs will develop, as investors weigh the need for industrial and farm workers worldwide against the projected number of SKs that will mature each year. When the labor market becomes "tight," governments will be pressured to lower the age a young SK may enter the workplace from, say, 16 to 14.

Second, *the nuclear family will become even more marginalized*. We can expect the number of well-to-do career women who pay a surrogate to carry their children to increase.<sup>13</sup> Just as synthetically produced music is becoming more favored than acoustically produced music, so too will artificial insemination and gestation become more popular methods—more safe and sane ways—of propagating *homo sapiens*, even among married couples.

Reproduction will become scientific and commoditized. For example, couples may someday be able to build “designer babies,” customized kids bred with selected, and inheritable, traits. The technology enabling this is dubbed *human germline modification*, something still on the other side of the technological horizon. If ever developed, human germline modification would become a logical extension of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), a technology already widely used in in-vitro fertilization (IVF) clinics. With PGD, an embryo is evaluated (diagnosed) to determine if it has genetic markers of disease before implantation in a womb. If it does carry those markers, it is destroyed (read, *murdered*). Human germline modification goes a step further. The embryo is modified such that it will produce a desired trait such as a strong body, a superlative brain, or resistance to certain diseases. This modification takes place very early in the embryo’s existence to ensure that the desired trait(s) is/are inheritable.<sup>14</sup>

“The rush down a very worrying slippery slope has begun.”<sup>15</sup> Already, genetically modifying fetuses to help treat diseased siblings is legal in the United Kingdom, where a court has ruled that a couple may use stem cells from a fetus they create through IVF in order to treat their six-year-old boy suffering from a blood disease. Of course, the IVF-created fetus will die in the procedure. It is as ironic as it is pathetic that the procedure is not yet technologically feasible.

## We-the-People vs. 007

Third, *definitions of equality, freedom, and even humankind itself will radically change*. To grasp the scope of this transformation, consider this plausible biography:

0546007 (007 for short), a male, was delivered of a machine in May 2025. Dienet Inc., the biotech firm that patented his DNA, owns this fellow, bred for upper-body strength. After successful “birth,” Dienet placed 007 in a corporate nursery, later a corporate preschool, and still later in a corporate grade school. He learned to read and perform basic arithmetic.

In July 2039, Dienet, responding to a work order from Universal Foods Inc., transferred 007 and some of his buddies to an agricultural worker conditioning school (AWCS), where he learned to drive combines and perform other mechanized farm duties. After passing several proficiency exams, 007 was shipped via steamship to an automated agricultural colony (AAC) in Indonesia, where he adjusted quite quickly to the workload.

Since that time, his contract agency has “outsourced” him 23 times to various AACs around the world. He is currently living in company housing in Peru with his wife, 1400634, a dietitian. They seem very happy.

Now, do not let this fact get past you: 0546007 has no last name—unless it is Dienet! This lack of surname reflects his lack of family. He has no family—has nothing to inherit. He has no property. He has no property rights. He has no rights at all. He is a slave.

007’s biography is far from impossible. It reflects the degree to which current definitions of freedom, equality, and mankind will need to change. Law, educational institutions, and cultural mores (like marriage) will have to change to accommodate 0546007 and other SKs like him. *Accommodate* may not be the right word, for it is possible that our current liberal ideas of equality and liberty will drown in the soup of the artificial womb. One analyst summarizes this concern by commenting that biotechnology might

undermine the principles of liberty and equality. If children are genetically engineered for greater health, strength, or intellectual capacity, . . . society could be plunged into a brave new world of genetically-based class hierarchy.<sup>16</sup>

Our legal system will have to morph mightily over the next several decades to deal with the 007s of the world. “All men are created equal” may become an idea as *passé* as the doctrine of States Rights in America. It is possible that a two-tier social order will evolve. We-the-People, protected by the Constitution or the UN Declaration of Human Rights (or by whatever), will be told that a two-class society is necessary and appropriate. The elite policy makers will assure We-the-People that a thoroughgoing body of law based on humanism will protect the SKs who make up the underclass. This law will dictate that SKs universally be well fed, appropriately clothed, adequately housed, provided health care, educated to their genetically-engineered level, and mercifully euthanized only when they are too old or sick to produce.

What more could 007 want? Certainly not recognition as a human being! That will become increasingly impossible. For in time, 007 will come to have the legal status not of *persona ex machine*, the person from a machine, but of *res ex machine*, the thing from a machine.

Moreover, We-the-People, those normally engendered, pensioned old-timers who have come to make up such a high proportion of this aging world, will not complain about the arrangement. After all,



0546007 and his SK peers pick the strawberries and build the cars We-the-People have convinced themselves they *need*. What's more, SKs generate the payroll taxes that pay We-the-People's pensions.

We-the-People are the voters. Lacking faith that God will provide for them in their old age, they will vote in support of SKs. For the sake of their survival, We-the-People will happily vote for them! In doing so, We-the-People share responsibility, if not culpability, for the brave new world the billion-dollar biotech industry is bringing to us. All are knaves, elite as well as rank and file!

We-the-People will vote and vote and vote for the SKs until We-the-People have died out. Eventually, all that will remain will be SKs ruled by a small, rich, cosmopolitan elite. That is progress.

## The Apocalypse and 007

The apostle John may have seen the miserable 007 in vision almost two millennia ago. Revelation 18 catalogs the goods traded by Babylon, the United States being a big part of that economic system. This passage lists some 28 items, the last of which is

"slaves, and souls of men" (verse 13, KJV). Will America again be involved in a slave trade, transporting individuals *en masse* via ocean-going vessels?

The Greek word *slave* does not appear in the text. The Greek noun there is *soma*, *body* as in Luke 12:4: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body." *Soma* appears over 140 times in the New Testament, rendered in the KJV as *body*, *bodies*, or *bodily*. Nowhere else in the KJV is *soma* ever rendered as *slave*, for which there are other Greek words.<sup>17</sup> The NKJV and any number of other translations use terms equivalent to "the bodies and souls of men." This rendering is both literal and correct.

But the noun *slaves*, appearing there in the KJV as a metonym for *body*, may not be at all malapropos, as the bodies John saw may have been those of slaves. What kind of slaves? In phrases like "the plays of Shakespeare" or "the music of Haydn," what is meant are those plays and that music created by Shakespeare, generated by Haydn. The "novels of Faulkner" are those novels written or produced by Faulkner. Are "the bodies and souls of men," those bodies and souls created by mankind, as distinct from

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> "The Embryo Wars: The U.N, Mitt Romney and California Corruption," *The New Atlantis*, Spring 2005, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> For a thorough discussion of how secularism was everything but inevitable, see Smith, Christian, *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life*, University of California Press, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Pike (1859–1891) was the Grand Commander of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, United States. The American headquarters of this branch of Masonry was Charleston, South Carolina.

<sup>4</sup> The third pillar of Masonic philosophy is humanistic optimism. Around this triangle of optimism, progress, and individualism, Freemasonry has built its doctrine that mankind will eventually create his own Millennium.

<sup>5</sup> Stolba, Christine, "Overcoming Motherhood," *Policy Review*, December 2002/January 2003, p.31. Stolba outlines the implications of unbridled choice in reproductive matters, where we "run the risk of ending up in a consumer-driven eugenic society." Having the "right" to choose does not empower one to make "right" choices. (Current and archived numbers of *Policy Review* are available online at <http://www.policyreview.org>.)

<sup>6</sup> Sex-selection generally involves the ultrasound machine and abortion. If ultrasound images suggest a fetus of unwanted gender, the mother aborts the child. Sex-selection in the Orient almost always favors boys; as practiced in America, it almost always favors girls. Another far more sophisticated method of sex-selection is sperm-sorting, a procedure used in connection with in-vitro fertilization (IVF). Here, sperm that will produce a fetus of the

"wrong" gender is not allowed to unite with an egg.

<sup>7</sup> See Rosen, Christine, "Why Not Artificial Wombs?" *The New Atlantis*, Fall 2003. p. 67, Rosen comments:

It is already possible to save a child born during the early part of the second trimester of pregnancy and weighing only two pounds. Research on liquid ventilation, particularly that conducted by Dr. Thomas Schaffer at Temple University, offers hope for treating premature infants by mimicking the fluid found in the lungs in utero. Isolettes—the technologically sophisticated incubators that fill the neonatal intensive care units of major hospitals—are, one might say, a cruder version of an artificial womb.

Christine Stolba, *ibid.*, writes that "researchers at Juntendou University in Tokyo, who have already had success keeping goat fetuses alive in artificial wombs for short spans of time, predict the creation of a fully functional artificial womb for human beings" by 2009. (Current and archived numbers of *The New Atlantis* are online at <http://www.thenewatlantis.com>.)

<sup>8</sup> Kurtz, Stanley, "Demographics and the Culture War," *Policy Review*, February/March 2005, p. 33. Kurtz mentions Christine Rosen's suggestion that, should artificial wombs someday become "safer" and more reliable than natural gestation, insurance companies may be in the vanguard of their use, insisting that they be employed by married couples.

<sup>9</sup> See Firestone, Shulamith, *The Dialectic of Sex*, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2003. Firestone argues that evolution's "accident" has created a feminine "caste" below that of men. Only by cybernation can sexual differences be obliterated and evolution's mistake

those that are produced through normal, “unassisted” procreation? Did John see in vision 007 and his peers, the creation of mankind’s technology, being shipped about the planet as workers?

Admittedly, the noun *slaves* in this context could refer to a trade in immigrant workers. The United States today imports thousands of workers as “H-1a’s,” a reference to the type of visa granted to work in this country as manual (usually agricultural) workers. There are also tens of thousands of “H-1b’s,” degreed professionals whose visas permit them to work in hospitals and computer facilities. Currently, most H-1a holders come from Mexico, while most H-1b holders come from the Philippines (specializing in medicine) or from India (specializing in information technology). Substantially profitable “agencies,” in fact little more than slave dealers, hire these individuals in their native land and job them out in America to the highest bidder. Perhaps the apostle John refers to this type of activity in Revelation 18:13.

Alternatively, he may be referring to wage workers, hirelings. Any number of mainstream economists have argued that income taxes indexed to salary levels

represent a type of forced labor.<sup>18</sup> Thus, workers who give up a share of their income are just “tax slaves” by any other name. John’s reference to “bodies and souls” may reflect his vision of workers highly taxed to support today’s welfare state—and the army of autocratic bureaucrats who serve as “benefactors” of the masses.<sup>19</sup>

Maybe though, as the economic crises rooted in mankind’s refusal to “multiply” become manifest and deepen, as the economies of the world settle into long-term stagnation *a la* Japan’s “Great Depression,” Babylon’s godless leaders may attempt to fill the labor shortage by generating individuals artificially. The enabling technology is almost here. The culture of materialism, consumerism, and feminism that would rationalize the use of that technology is already here. It could be only a matter of time before soup-kids work to pay our pensions, harvest our crops, and build our cars.

Oh, I forgot to ask: Would “the bodies and souls” of SKs, born of machine rather than of woman, have in them the spirit of man (Job 32:8)?

God will have the last word yet!

—Charles Whitaker

corrected. She believes that childhood should be abolished by granting children the same rights as adults and that children should experience “as much genital sex (with adults) as they are capable of.” When women have rewired themselves through cybernetics to create a new being, death will be dissolved. Of course!

Simone de Beauvoir, who spoke for the Second Wave of Feminists, praises technology (specifically cloning) as a boon to women everywhere: “Perhaps in time the cooperation of the male will become unnecessary in procreation—the answer, it would seem, to many a woman’s prayer?” (*The Second Sex*, Everyman’s Library, 1953).

<sup>10</sup> A good source of information from a conservative viewpoint about bio-ethical issues is at <http://www.bioethics.com>.

<sup>11</sup> For a thoroughgoing analysis of the commoditizing of reproduction, see Kass, Leon R., ed., *Human Cloning and Human Dignity: An Ethical Inquiry*, Diane Publishing Company, November 2002.

<sup>12</sup> See Smith, Wesley J., *Consumer’s Guide to a Brave New World*, Encounter Books, 2004. Smith’s title is clearly tongue-in-cheek. He discusses the commercial aspects of biotechnology: the potential profits, the farming of women’s eggs, aborted female fetuses bought and sold for ovaries, and the like. Smith, an attorney for the Anti-Euthanasia Task Force, has written an equally readable book entitled *Culture of Death: An Assault on Medical Ethics in America* (Encounter Books, 2002), where he decries in specific terms the devaluation of human life by the medical community and the utilitarianism of medical care driven by profit-seeking insurance companies.

<sup>13</sup> Kurtz. *ibid.*, p. 45. The practice has been euphemistically dubbed “social surrogacy.”

<sup>14</sup> Smith, Heather J., “Customized Kids May Be the Wave of the Future,” *Science and Theology News*, June 2005, p. 34. The article is an interview with Professor Cole-Turner of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. (*Science and Theology News* is sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation and is available online at <http://www.stnews.org/index.php>.)

<sup>15</sup> Smith, Heather J., “UK Court Finds Designer Babies Legal to Help Siblings,” *Science and Theology News*, June 2005, p. 31. Quoted from an unnamed spokeswoman for Comment on Reproductive Ethics, a conservative group in the United Kingdom.

<sup>16</sup> Kurtz. *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> *Soma* is *Strong’s* #4983. The usual, though not only, Greek word for *slave* is *doulos*, *Strong’s* #1401, as in Matthew 25:23: “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

<sup>18</sup> See Feser, Edward, “Taxation, Forced Labor, and Theft,” *The Independent Review*, Fall 2000, p. 219. Mr. Feser teaches at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. (Selected past articles are available online at <http://www.independent.org/publications/the%5Fighthouse>.)

<sup>19</sup> In Luke 22:25, Christ asserts that “those who exercise authority over [the Gentiles] are called ‘benefactors.’” The noun *benefactor* comes from the Greek word meaning “a worker of good” and therefore a philanthropist (*Strong’s* #2110). Devoted to humanism, the elite of this day and age bear a condescending, patronizing attitude toward the rank and file, thinking they have done the *demos*, the people, a favor by constructing the edifice of the welfare state.

(continued from page 6)

bad, but his poor self-analysis persuades him that he has no urgent need to seek God any further. He then merely floats, going through the motions, even feeling good about himself as he neglects so great salvation (Hebrews 2:3). His opinion of his holiness as compared with God's judgment is so far off base, it causes Jesus Christ to regurgitate him from His body.

Recall the mention in Hosea 10:1 of increasing and embellishing altars just before Israel fell to Assyria. One would think that, if altars increase during this period of prosperity, then religion is flourishing. Indeed, religion flourished, as Amos, Hosea's contemporary, clearly reports (see Amos 5:21-27). However, it was not the religion God gave through Moses, but idolatry that flourished! It was a corruption of that religion, for the Israelites syncretized that holy way with Baalism and other idolatries.

In Hosea 10:2, God charges Israel with having a divided heart. Commentaries are at odds over what the Hebrew word translated "divided" means. Most modern translations use "false," "deceitful," or "faithless," and none of these are wrong, including "divided." The Hebrew word suggests "smoothness" or "flattering," describing people who "talk the talk" but do not "walk the walk."

Isaiah 29:13 clarifies what God means: "Therefore the LORD said: 'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.'" Their reverence for Him was mere intellectual accommodation intended to appease Him. They used the name of God frequently, saying they trusted Him, but they filled the nation with stealing, lying, and murder.

II Kings 17:33 illustrates their worship: "They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods—according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away." This describes to a

T what Israel did then and their descendants are continuing to do today. Moffatt renders this, "They worshipped the Eternal, and they also served their own gods."

This chapter reports on the behavior of the people placed in Israel after Israel's conquest and deportation by Assyria between 722-720 BC. These people, who became known as the Samaritans, feared the Lord but worshipped their own gods. They were afraid of God, but they did not really change their way of life. Thus, they developed a syncretic religious system, a blending of the truth of God and outright paganism. The Jews of Christ's day clearly recognized this putrid blend and despised the Samaritans for it.

What is so interesting is that, by verse 36, God is no longer reporting on the Samaritans but is addressing Israel. In other words, God is saying that He was driven to defeat and scatter Israel because they were guilty of exactly the same sin as the Samaritans! They too had blended the worship of the true God with outright paganism, utterly corrupting the relationship He had established with them.

It is urgent that we understand what is involved here because it reveals the cause of God's anger that led to Israel's defeat and scattering. We must understand that *our god is not what we say we worship but what we serve. Our god is what we give our lives over to.*

Theoretically, the Israelites did not believe in idols, but in reality, they did. They believed in a Creator God, but they worshipped Him at the shrines they erected to the Baals. While they gave lip service to the Creator, they adopted most of the Canaanitish religion with its lewd immorality, and in actual practice, patterned their life after it. In daily life, they conformed to and reflected the Babylonish system just as Israel does today. This is exactly what God warns us to flee, and the only way to come out of it is by developing and maturing in our relationship with God.

## Measuring Growth

Returning to Hosea 10:1 and the idea of prosperity and the increase of altars, we can observe a connection between this concept and the Laodicean's making a poor judgment of his spiritual condition. The Revised Standard Version translates these phrases as, "The more his fruit increased the more altars he built; as his country improved he improved his pillars."

Both altars and pillars are references to reli-

gion—specifically, pagan religion. The plural terms reflect a typically carnal conclusion that numerical increase indicates growth and of a sort that is good because God must surely approve. Growth in the number of places of worship would convince most that religion is flourishing.

Religion, though, is different from secular pursuits. The greatest Teacher and Pastor who ever graced this earth preached to tens of thousands of

people, yet ended His ministry with only 120 converts. Moreover, He calls the church a “little flock,” signifying that it would never grow large (Luke 12:32). Using numbers as the standard, Jesus was an outright failure! Any large Billy Graham evangelistic campaign produces more “conversions” each night than Jesus had during His entire ministry.

Many comparisons are elusive and easily manipulated, not deserving to be depended upon as true evaluations of quality. For instance, Americans tend to rate the greatness of a city by the size of its population. But is New York City really the greatest American city? Does it really deserve to be called “the Big Apple”? In the public mind, the strength of a commercial business is measured by its income. If a business does a million dollars more business this year than last,

then it is considered to be flourishing. Evaluating in this manner is one thing that gets the Laodicean in trouble. Religion, however, is not that sort of commodity at all; it is spirit.

We sometimes say, “So and so is a big man.” What do we mean by this? The person may not be physically impressive, but we suggest the greatness of his influence. Isaiah 53:2 says of Jesus, “He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” Likewise, according to tradition, the apostle Paul was not a physically impressive man. The spirituality of these men made them great, but this quality cannot be measured numerically because spirit involves many intangibles. Thus, the ultimate measure of a Christian is qualitative not quantitative. It is not a question of how many but of what sort.

## Idolatry Most Subtle

Hosea 10:1-2 is an almost perfect foundation for understanding the erroneous judgment the Laodicean makes—and thus the substance of his spiritual problem. An additional historical reference in Amos adds perspective to this condition. Amos approaches Israel’s spiritual problems from a somewhat different angle than Hosea. He shows the people as having all the forms of the true religion, yet because it lacks substance, they are well off but almost totally lacking in social justice. They take care of themselves but not their relationship with God or with their neighbors.

Hosea says that Israel “brings forth fruit for himself.” In Revelation 3, Laodicea is contrasted to Philadelphia. The Philadelphian loves God and his brother, but the Laodicean loves himself as exhibited by what he spends his time doing. The Laodicean carries the name “Christian,” but he is not serving the Lord Christ except in a most passive manner. He serves himself, which is why he says he needs nothing. He does not need even God! Laodiceanism is perhaps the most subtle of all forms of idolatry.

Jeremiah 48:11 contains another description of this affliction. In this case, it describes Moab, but the principle applies to Israel’s and the Laodicean’s condition: “Moab has been at ease from his youth; he has settled on his dregs [*on his lees*, KJV], and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, nor has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent has not changed.” Zephaniah 1:12 adds a thought that gives a sense of the Laodicean’s attitude: “And it shall come to

pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency [*on their lees*, KJV], who say in their heart, ‘The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.’”

We need to connect these two thoughts with the Laodicean’s evaluation of himself and his relationship with God. If the Laodicean says he needs nothing, then he has settled on his lees. As we see from Christ’s reaction, it angers Him greatly. The “lees,” or dregs, are the sediment that forms during the fermentation of grapes. They eventually sink to the bottom and harden. Metaphorically, being settled on the lees indicates a floating, “take it easy” approach to life, which eventually sets into a lifestyle that is unacceptable to God.

A person settled on his lees is one who, through spiritual idleness and ease, gradually becomes morally indifferent, tolerant of his lack of spiritual drive, and ultimately hardened to God and sin. In the process, he becomes blind to his spiritual state. Zephaniah 1:12 concludes that such a one has reasoned himself into what amounts to a practical atheism. He says by his conduct that God is not really governing or judging; there will be neither reward for obedience nor punishment for sin.

So he gives himself over to whatever is his pleasure. It is not that he is notoriously immoral, but rather the Laodicean is a person straddling the proverbial fence. Though he has saving knowledge of God, he is also attached to the world and afraid to

let go. He is deceived by the combination of his shallow knowledge of God and by his prosperity into

thinking he has found the perfect balance. He has convinced himself he has the best of both.

## No Borrowing of Character

The principle in Haggai 2:11-14 is vital for us to understand in this regard:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying, 'If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?'" Then the priests answered and said, "No." And Haggai said, "If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?" So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean." Then Haggai answered and said, "'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' says the LORD, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.'"

Uncleanness, or the defilement of this world, can be transferred from one person to another, but holiness cannot. Likewise, righteousness, character, and preparedness for God's Kingdom cannot be transferred from person to person because they represent internal qualities, matters of the heart.

Holy character and righteousness are personal matters, intangibles that accrue from spending long periods of time learning, applying, and honing spiritual skills in the daily experiences of life. It is too late when one needs a skill immediately, and it is not there. The same is true of character: It cannot be borrowed. Perhaps more importantly, we cannot borrow a relationship with God.

This ought to teach us that opportunity knocks and then passes. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), the foolish virgins fail to anticipate the possibility that the Bridegroom might come later than they expect. When they are awakened, there is no time to do anything except fill their own lamps. This proves that nobody can deliver his brother. Each person, within his relationship with God, determines his own destiny.

The Laodicean's faith, however, has become perfunctory. He attends church and is involved with brethren socially, but privately, he merely goes through the motions in much the same way as the Israelites did in Amos' day. Absent is the fervency that develops through careful analysis and evaluation of the world and its corrupt promises against God and His holy promises.

God shows that the unprepared will not be admitted to His Kingdom. We should not construe this as a calloused rejection of a person's perhaps lifelong desire, but we should realize that the Laodicean has rejected the Kingdom of God on a daily basis over a long time! God is not unfair in His judgment. He gives the Laodicean what he showed he wanted. God reciprocates in kind.

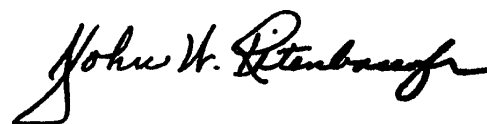
Perhaps we can understand God's judgment if we imagine what ours would be if we were engaged to someone who never prepares for our upcoming marriage. What person would want a wife or a husband who had no enthusiasm for the marriage? Or perhaps we can compare it to a person who meets someone who would make a wonderful mate, but despite having ample opportunity and mutual admiration, the relationship never develops due to the other's being constantly distracted.

Jesus instructs in Matthew 6:22-24, 33:

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. . . . But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Loyalty cannot be divided between Christ and the world. Our purpose must be undivided singleness of mind, energetically given to seeking God, His Kingdom, and His righteousness as our first priority. This is the way we become one with God. This is the means by which we can work out our salvation (Philippians 2:12), thus ensuring that we can escape the plague of Laodiceanism and attend the Feast of Tabernacles again next year.

In Christian love,





## *Fiddling While Europe Burns*

In late October and early November, the suburbs of Paris literally burned with riots. The trigger was the accidental electrocution of two boys of North African descent fleeing from police. But what ensued from the Muslim sons of African and Arab immigrants—who have not integrated into French society—were violent confrontations with the police, the burning of thousands of vehicles; the disruption of trains; the incineration of churches, schools, and supermarkets; the shooting of emergency personnel; and the deployment of nearly 12,000 security officers. While the fatality count was low, the images of riot police and the rioting progeny of immigrants against a backdrop of France in flames painfully illuminate how divided the French nation really is.

The riots in the Paris suburbs, though, were not isolated. Not only did the arson and clashing with police spread to more than 300 towns throughout France, minor incidents of vehicle torching also occurred in Belgium and Germany. Even as the “intefadeh of the poor” (as the Egyptian daily *Al-Massaie* mistakenly named the riots) dies down, this uprising of non-integrated French citizens must be seen as another milestone in the clash between Muslim and secular/Judeo-Christian cultures. It follows on the heels of train bombings in Spain, subway bombings in Britain, and the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh.

It is easy for the international media to blame the Paris riots on unemployment and job discrimination, Spain’s train bombings on its involvement in the invasion of Iraq, and Britain’s subway bombings on its hosting of the G8 summit or its alignment with the United States. Some go so far as to blame Theo van Gogh for his own murder—because he, a citizen of arguably the most tolerant country on earth, did not demonstrate enough cultural sensitivity. While the politicians and globalists are happy to blind themselves to the obvious, the average shopkeeper, farmer, and commuter are becoming increasingly convinced that some cultures simply do not mix.

The “strength through diversity” lie is becoming ever more transparent—at least to the people who have to deal with its practical ramifications. “One of the greatest dishonesties of European policy and intellectual discourse,” observes the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, “has been that multicultural issues can only be discussed in one direction—the ‘accepting society.’ Whoever calls on the immigrants themselves to integrate better is seen as a nationalist monster who lacks ‘openness.’”

Culture is the way of living, thinking, speaking, and behaving, including ethics, morals, standards, and obligations, built up by a human group and transmitted to succeeding generations. The recent conflagrations in Europe are between a culture roughly based on the Koran and one roughly based on the Bible. These foundational writings, while not necessarily influencing its minute details, tend to set the overall direction, tenor, and parameters of a culture. They are the distant source of what a person believes about an afterlife, and what is acceptable behavior during the

present one. Whether or not an individual studies them religiously, these writings influence the culture, and the culture influences the individual. Different sources—different foundations—will always result in diverse applications in living, thinking, speaking, and behaving. Regardless of whether the cultural clash is violent, the friction and tension are always present. So, even though the fires may be presently extinguished, the embers beneath still smolder, awaiting the next *pneuma*—wind or spirit—to reignite.

What will be the result? Enhanced security, curfews, appeals for calm, employment quotas, upgraded housing, greater sensitivity, more dialogue—these shortsighted measures do nothing to change the underlying cultures. The citizenry recognizes this.

This continued clashing could devolve along several lines—and they are not mutually exclusive. If events continue long enough without a major flare-up, the immigrant culture will simply overwhelm the native culture by virtue of its higher birthrate. However, it seems likely that, before that happens, the cultural friction will cause an eruption that cannot be quenched by mere multicultural mantras.

A second possibility is that those who recognize the coming battle will scatter themselves wherever they feel they will be sheltered from the violence. Columnist Mark Steyn, in “Early Skirmish in the Eurabian Civil War” (*The Telegraph*, November 8, 2005), puts it this way:

Some of us believe this is an early skirmish in the Eurabian civil war. If the insurgents emerge emboldened, what next? In five years’ time, there will be even more of them, and even less resolve on the part of the French state. That, in turn, is likely to accelerate the demographic decline. Europe could face a continent-wide version of the “white flight” phenomenon seen in crime-ridden American cities during the 1970s, as Danes and Dutch scramble to America, Australia or anywhere else that will have them.

A third option is popular resistance by the native culture. *The International Herald Tribune* opened its November 3, 2005, editorial by observing: “The suburbs of Paris, whether the *faubourgs* of the French Revolution or the *banlieues* [suburbs] of today, have a long history of violent uprisings by enraged citizens.” Yet, historically, those “enraged citizens” have been culturally French, not just nationally French as are the recent rioters. Thus far, the secular culture in Europe—which, liked or not, still retains a remnant of the Judeo-Christian culture—has bowed to multiculturalism and retreated. The various governments, while occasionally making “strong” statements about immigration and integration, are not yet willing to upset the apple cart.

Even so, an environment is slowly being created that is ideal for a strong, nationalist, militaristic leader to rise to power under the guise of delivering what people are beginning to clamor for: a Europe for the Europeans, a la Daniel 11:40-42. What such a leader would actually deliver is another matter altogether.

# BIBLE STUDY: *THE PARABLES OF MATTHEW 13*

## *Part Two: The Parable of the Sower*

In the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9, 19-23; also Mark 4:3-9, 14-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15), Jesus reveals why those who hear the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God are not always receptive in the same way. People who are called have their minds opened, the Holy Spirit enabling them to take it to heart, yet many see its surface value but do not internalize it. The parable illustrates the church's relationship to the different groups of people with which it comes in contact.

Jesus uses three components—the *sower*, the *seed* and the *soils*—to indicate the differences. His story shows the fate of the sown seed, the different types of soils on which

it fell, and the resulting effects. Though Jesus names it “the parable of the sower” (Matthew 13:18), the subject matter sheds particular light on the diverse soils. Nevertheless, the sower does not play a minor role in the parable, since without Him no sowing would occur, without which there would be no possibility of fruit. However, the sower represents a group, as well as Jesus Himself (Matthew 13:37). The language suggests any typical sower, so God's ministers may be considered sowers of the gospel as well. The Parable of the Sower is essential because it introduces and anticipates the whole series of parables in Matthew 13.



1. What natural conditions regarding seed and soils does Jesus describe? Matthew 13:3-8; Mark 4:3-9; Luke 8:4-8.

**COMMENT:** A farmer places seed in the ground so it will sprout and bear fruit. Some seeds fall on unplowed, unturned, hard ground. This type of soil does not allow the seed to sink in, and the birds easily find and devour the seed.

Stony ground, having little or no soil, has insufficient nourishment for seeds to root and grow into a healthy plant. Initially, they appear to grow quicker because, with less soil to establish a root system, they expend their energy in producing the stem and leaves. When the sun grows hot (representing the light of God's truth exposing them, or trials and persecution testing them), however, the sprouts wither away, the result of inadequate root systems.

Fertile and rich soil provides nutrients for the seeds to produce a crop that varies in its yield. It is common for crops to produce a hundred, sixty, or thirty grains for each one sown. For example, some strains of wheat will produce a crop twelve or fifteen hundred times the original amount of seed sown.

2. On whose ears does God's Word fall and take root? Matthew 13:9, 16-17; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8, 10.

**COMMENT:** The seed represents God's Word communicated in various ways: in preaching, writing, and acts of divine intervention. Those God chooses understand the gospel because it comes only by the power of His Spirit. Without this spiritual power, the hearer is susceptible to having God's knowledge stolen by Satan, the accuser and tempter.

God's Word sometimes falls on the ears of people whose hearts are calloused by sin, on whom it makes no real impression. Like seed on a hard-packed road, it is consumed before it ever has a chance to develop. Such hardened people soon lose interest in Christ's good news and continue in the ways of the world.

3. Are all who are intrigued by God's Word chosen by Him? Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21; 22:14; Mark 4:16-17; Luke 8:13; 12:23-25.

**COMMENT:** The stony ground represents those who hear the gospel and feel titillated by its truth. Though their senses are excited, they have no depth of understanding—no rich soil in which it may take root and grow. While suffering

anxiety from sin, they respond to the attractive offer of God's mercy. The truth offers them peace of mind, pardon from sin, and salvation with eternal life. Believing they are forgiven, their anxieties seem to disappear, and temporary peace and happiness fill their lives, but they have no foundation upon which to support permanent joy. Their gladness soon subsides, as does their desire to live righteously. They begin to fade from God's truth because they have no real appreciation for Christ's sacrifice or the conviction to resist temptation or to endure trial and persecution. Because they exhibit no true repentance, it becomes evident that they are not true Christians. Excited, human emotion carries them for a time, but it cannot sustain them through the long process of conversion.

4. Are those who are called beyond being enticed by the world? Matthew 13:7, 22; 7:13-14; Mark 4:18-19; Luke 8:14. What kind of response does God desire to see from those He calls? Matthew 13:8, 23; Mark 4:20; Luke 8:15.

**COMMENT:** The thorny ground symbolizes those who become consumed by the anxieties of this physical life and the deceitful enticement of wealth. The constant pressures of everyday life—providing sustenance, maintaining employment, seeking education, performing social duties, etc.—can be distracting, causing Christians to ignore God and spiritual growth.

The desire for wealth magnifies this distraction. It is enticing but yields the expected rewards: It promises to make us happy, but when gained, leaves us spiritually empty (I Timothy 6:7-10). The temptation and pursuit of wealth produces bad fruit: dishonesty, stealing, oppression of the poor, and taking advantage of others.

The good ground corresponds to those whose hearts and minds are softened by God's calling and receive it genuinely. They are a rich and fine soil—a mind that submits itself to the full influence of God's truth (Acts 22:14; Ephesians 4:1-6). The called of God not only accept His Word—the message of Jesus Christ—as rich soil accepts a seed for growth, they also bear much fruit (John 15:5, 8).

In the next issue, we will look at the related Parable of the Tares, which portrays the relationship of the church to the wicked one and his agents.