Articles by George Landis

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Mary's Mistakes (Apr 1960)

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Mary’s Mistakes

George Landis

Scripture Reading John 20:1-18

Wonderfully saved by Christ, Mary Magdalene was deep in her devotedness to the Lord, evidenced in that she was the last at the cross and the first at the tomb. Though there is much in her to commend, we will first consider —

Her Mistakes

For mistakes she made in spite of her unquestioned devotion to her Saviour. And many of the Lord’s followers are still making the same mistakes. Perhaps we have made some of them.

The first mistake was that Mary thought Jesus Christ was dead, being unaware that He had triumphed over death and the grave. She came thinking that He was the victim of death, when in reality He had vanquished that dark foe. Believing Him dead, she looked in the wrong place for her Lord. The best she hoped for was to find His body. Yet, think how hopeless would be our lot if her hope had been realized (1 Cor. 15:17-19). How often God gives us something better than our hopes!

Mary’s second mistake was that she thought that she could anoint the body of her Lord. Little did she realize that He had received a greater anointing; that even then

His garments were filled with the fragrance of heavenly myrrh, aloes, and cassia. On the other hand, Mary of Bethany, evidently believing the Lord's predictions of His own death and resurrection, anointed Him before He died and made no such attempt afterward.

Are we ever too late in acts of devotion which we intended rendering to our Lord?

A third mistake was that Mary thought the Lord's body had been removed from the tomb and concealed elsewhere. Rashly leaping at an unwarranted conclusion she unwittingly gave a false report: "They have taken away my Lord." Little did she realize that His body was no longer in the hands of man; but that He was Himself the One who held the keys of death and hades in His mighty hands.

Mary made a fourth mistake as she wept in deep sorrow when she should have been filled with rapturous rejoicing. She was soon to discover that her tears were utterly needless. How many of us have sobbed when we should have been singing, have mourned when we should have been rejoicing! None of us dare be too critical of Mary.

Her fifth mistake was that she mistook Christ for the gardener. Blinded by tears, she did not recognize the Blessed One. Many, like Mary, do not recognize the Lord in the presence of sorrow and bereavement. Let us pray that our tears, whether needless or necessary, may wash the film of earth from our eyes that we may the better behold the Lord and praise Him.

Still another mistake was that Mary fancied that she could become the custodian of Christ's body; little

knowing that in resurrection He is the keeper of the bodies of His saints.

The seventh and last mistake of Mary was that she thought the former earthly relationship could be continued. Mary would hold her Lord as she had formerly known Him. She did not apprehend the new relationship into which He would introduce His own, as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:16, “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.”

Having noted these seven mistakes of Mary, we will consider, in the second place, that

They Were Mistakes of the Head and Not of the Heart

They were a result of her failure to fully apprehend what the Lord had said concerning His death and resurrection. But, for that matter, neither had His most intimate disciples, Peter and John, grasped what He had said. There was no excuse for them in view of His repeated predictions of His passion and resurrection. They had failed to enter into His thoughts in spite of all the privileges which had been theirs, such as having been called His friends (John 15:15). Even the chief enemies of Christ had remembered these predictions, when they besought Pilate to seal and secure the tomb lest His disciples should steal away His body and report that He had risen as He had prophesied (Matt. 27: 62-64).

Mary sought ignorantly, ‘tis true, but she sought with her whole heart. Love for Christ brought her to the

tomb, the last place where she had seen Him. Love kept her there, lingering where He had been. Without Him, Whom her soul loved and adored, life was as barren as the grave and as empty as the garden sepulchre. Her heart was absorbed with Christ. He was everything to her. She sobbed because her heart was breaking without its object.

The reason for her great love was that she had experienced a great deliverance. Seven demons had been cast out of her by her Lord. Once she had been completely in Satan's dominion. Now she was free. She had been forgiven much, therefore she loved much.

God wonderfully overruled her mistakes for her blessing and ours. It is noteworthy that no word of rebuke fell from the lips of the Lord when He made Himself known. He saw her heart and measured its devotedness to Himself.

In the third place, it is well to note—

She did not give up her search because of discouraging circumstances. She did not become occupied with her home and return to it. Peter and John, even though they were convinced that the Lord was risen, returned home and did not seek Him. Mary, on the other hand though not assurred that He was risen, lingered where the Object of her love had been.

Then too, she was not so occupied with the angels that she forgot her Lord. So far as Mary was concerned, the lines of the hymn were true:

"No angel could His place have taken,

Highest of the high tho' He."

Some today are more concerned with angelic beings and departed saints now in heaven, than they are with the Lord in Glory.

And Mary did not permit even death to break her devotedness to Christ. Observe how she speaks of Him to the angels: “They have taken away,” not merely “the Lord,” but “my Lord.” In life and in death He was hers. She would never surrender her claim to Him.

May we consider in the last place

An Unmistakable Manifestation of Christ to Mary

The Lord Jesus is not far from any heart thus taken up with Him. His approach to Mary was gentle, gracious; and in the hour of her deep sorrow He addressed a simple question to her: “Woman, why weepest thou, Whom seekest thou?” It was not that He did not already know, but He would tenderly make her heart vocal.

Mary’s answer betrays the condition of her heart. Thinking Him to be the gardener, she exclaimed: “Sir, if thou have born Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Notice the three “Him’s.” She uses no name, assuming that even the gardener would know of Whom she spake. Christ so filled her heart and mind, that she assumed that He must fill others as well.

Then we see a beautiful example of the Good Shepherd calling His own sheep by name (John 10:3), as He uttered the one word she had so often heard from His lips: “Mary.” With what intonations of familiar grace the word was spoken. Her response was immediate, and also but one word. In (publicly) reading this passage, I

have wished that I could put into that word all the pent-up devotion and adoration of Mary, as she exclaimed in a burst of full recognition: “Rabboni,” (Teacher).

Denying a continuance of the former relationship, as we have already seen, the Lord then gave her a commission: “Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God and your God.” Of this commission’s content, J. N. Darby forcefully says: “A work had been accomplished that placed Him, as Man and Son always, with the Father in glory, Man in this blessed relationship; but it was a work of redemption that set His own, redeemed according to the value of that work, in the same glory and in the same relationships as Himself. And this was based upon the sure foundation of that work, in which God Himself and the Father had been fully glorified, and had made Themselves known according to all Their perfections (Compare John 13:31, 32, and 17:4, 5). According to these perfections, the disciples are introduced into the position and according to the relationship of Jesus Himself with God. This was the necessary fruit of the work of Jesus; without this, He would not have seen of the travail of His soul.”

In avoiding Mary’s mistakes, God grant that our hearts may be like hers, filled with deep devotion to our risen Lord and Saviour.

The Tragedy of Unthankfulness (Oct 1960)

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George M. Landis

In keeping with the thought of a national Thanksgiving Day, we read in Psalm 92:2, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.” The world is always looking for “a good thing,” and is willing to pay large sums for something of merit. Recognizing these facts, may we consider a “good thing” which is often overlooked. According to our text, giving thanks unto the Lord is definitely a good thing. Surely none would presume to question this statement even if it did not appear in the Bible.

We will approach the subject of thanksgiving from a slightly different angle than that from which it is generally considered. As white is more conspicuous when placed upon a black background, so good is the more noticeable when surrounded by evil. If, as our text states, it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord; the converse must also be true, that it is a bad thing not to give thanks unto Him. Perhaps our hearts and minds will be more easily stimulated by a negative consideration of the subject. So, instead of heading this message, “The Blessing of Thanksgiving,” we will give it the title, “The Tragedy of Unthankfulness.”

With this end in view, we will observe, in the first place, that failure to give thanks to God for His manifold gifts is a sin.

Sinful Failure

Though you admit that thanksgiving is a virtue, are you as ready to admit that unthankfulness is a sin? Perhaps we all need to confess the sin of failing to say “thank You” to our God.

Unthankfulness is a direct violation of the will and Word of God. The Bible commands: “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:18). Unthankfulness is also a failure to follow the example of biblical saints. In the Psalms we see how frequently King David, that sweet singer of Israel, breaks forth in outbursts of thanksgiving. When Daniel heard the decree, that all who prayed to any other god than the king were to be cast into a den of lions; we read that “He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” How many of us could sing a song of thanksgiving to the obligato of the lions’ roar? When Paul was in the midst of the storm, and the doom of the ship seemed certain, we read that he encouraged the sailors to take food; “and when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God, in the presence of them all.” Again, unthankfulness is a failure to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before He fed five thousand and on another occasion the four thousand, He took the loaves and fishes and gave thanks before He gave to His disciples and they to the multitude. Doubtless many families will on Thanksgiving Day sit down to a table laden with food and never stop to give thanks to God, the Giver of it all.

Unthankfulness does not recognize the sovereignty of God. Since “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness

thereof," what right have we to call things our own? And what right do we have to use God's property without recognizing, at least by word of mouth, His ownership? Unthankfulness is a failure to admit our dependence upon God. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." "Every good gift and every perfect gift… cometh down from the Father of Lights." Think what suffering would result if God were to withhold His mercies but for a week. How sad it is that many show more gratitude to a fellow creature than to God the Creator and Sustainer of all. Have you ever noted the relative size of your "thank you's"? We give a strong, emphatic "thank you" to a friend. We give a faint "thank you" to one of our own family. But when it comes to Almighty God, from the alms-basket of whose providence we live day by day, many fail to say "thank you" at all. Surely the law of common courtesy condemns us for such a course.

Having seen that unthankfulness is a sin, we call your attention, in the second place, to the tragic results of unthankfulness.

Resulting Tragedy

These results are graphically set forth in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Did you ever observe that unthankfulness is one of the two causes for God's awful indictment to the human race as found in that same chapter? After having stated that man had an adequate revelation of God's eternal power and Deity in the beginning, and is therefore without excuse; we read this significant statement: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves

to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." Because man failed to praise God for what He is, and thank Him for what He did; man brought upon himself all the tragic results of idolatry. He became vain (empty) in his reasonings, darkened in his heart, foolish in his actions, idolatrous as to religion, morally corrupt and filled with all kinds of iniquity.

Today we need the fearful warning which this chapter gives. God is neither named nor recognized in many homes, family altars are broken down, parents are no longer obeyed, God is not honored, and lawlessness abounds. Sad indeed, is the nation, the people, the family, or the individual who loses a sense of God.

We have seen the sin of unthankfulness and the tragic results thereof; may we look, in the third place, at —the many objects for which we may express our thanks to God and thus avoid committing the sin of ingratitude.

Objects For Thanksgiving

We should be thankful for national blessings. For some years we have been at peace with the world. During the two world wars, many meetings were called that prayers might be offered for peace. Should we not take time now to thank God for the measure of peace which we enjoy, especially when much of the world is seething with unrest? History shows that war may break out most unexpectedly.

Again, we have been abundantly blessed with temporal necessities. Harvests have been so bountiful that our leaders are disturbed with the disposition of surpluses.

Work has, for the most part, been plentiful. But few are in real want. Yet there are millions in other parts of the world who are not so favoured, many of whom never know what it is to have enough to eat and are constantly on the verge of starvation.

There are also many personal blessings for which we should thank God. He has supplied our needs, given us health and happiness, enriched us with families and friends. Let us render the thanks that belongs to Him. Let us never forget how quickly these things might be taken from us. The God who gives, sometimes sees fit to take away.

Those of us who are really Christians have great spiritual blessings far exceeding in value all temporal gifts. We have been saved by the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross to redeem us from our sins. We have redemption, forgiveness, justification, peace with God, eternal life, and the assurance of eternal bliss in the world to come. Since God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

In the next place, we call your attention to the fact that only a redeemed soul can render acceptable thanks to God.

Acceptable Thanksgiving

In Hebrews 13:15 we read, “By Him (i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ) let us offer the sacrifice of praise unto God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name.” How can we give thanks unto His worthy Name, if we have never accepted the One who bears

that Name as our Saviour; and while we are spurning His gracious invitation and counting His precious blood a common thing, unworthy of our notice? “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me,” the Lord Jesus said. Yet there are many who presume to come in their own name or in the name of some other one. Since salvation comes through a simple acceptance of God’s unspeakable Gift, His only begotten Son, and since all spiritual blessings come through Jesus Christ, we must know Him to be able to thank God.

Having thus seen the sin of unthankfulness and the sad results attending it, having considered how this sin may be avoided, and who may render acceptable thanks; we must conclude that, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,” and a tragedy not to do so.

“Thou life of my life, blessed Jesus,

Thou death of the death that was mine,

For me was Thy cross and Thine anguish,

Thy love and Thy sorrow divine;

Thou suffered the cross and the torment,

That I might forever go free

A thousand, a thousand thanksgivings,

I bring, blessed Saviour to Thee.”

Study how to use the Bible so as to “walk with God,” and lead others to Christ. Set apart at least fifteen minutes each day for studying it; this will be grand in result.

Read the Bible as if it were written for yourself, and be sure you hunt for something. Before reading always pray

to God to help you understand it, and then expect that He will.

Let the reading of the Word be always accompanied with prayer that the Holy Spirit may be your teacher, and guide you into all truth. Also, if you read with self-application, the Word will so search and judge the heart and life, that confession of sin will be the necessary result, and this ought to follow at once on the evil being discovered. Then the promises and comforts of Scripture will call for instant and continual thanksgiving; then will the truth become a sanctifying power, being received in communion with God.

Believers are travellers in an enemy's country, and require to carry their sword continually in their hand or by their side, ready to defend themselves — have the Bible always ready at hand or in your pocket. Of what use will your sword be if you keep it in the scabbard hanging on the wall of your house — the Bible on the shelf and not used? If you have not exercised yourself by the handling of it and become familiar to its use, it will be of little service to you in the hour of battle. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword.

—The Barley Cake.

Quack Doctors of the Soul (June-July 1966)

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George M. Landis

“But ye are forgers of lies, ye are physicians of no value” (Job 13:4). “When Ephriam saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephriam to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound” (Hosea 5:13).

In these words two Old Testament writers disowned false physicians. Our concern today is with fake healers of the soul.

As the great desire of a sick person is to find a doctor who can cure his disease, so the dominant wish of one who is conscious of soul sickness is to find one who is able to effect a cure for his ailment. We rightfully despise the medical charlatan who sells his useless nostroms for gain, deceiving, disappointing and often fatally injuring the unfortunate and unsuspecting. Not only do they prey upon the misfortune of their patients, but even worse, prevent them from going to a reputable specialist who might be able to relieve their distress. Even more dispicable is the quack doctor of the soul. His number is legion for the devil sends forth many deceivers. The Word of God warns us against such. “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13).

How often we find physicians gravitating to the same area or the same building. In one city there is a three-

block district on a certain street where a number of doctors are to be found at the one end of the street and at the other end, undertakers. Let us consider the experience of the sinner, conscious of his ailing soul, as he walks down “False Way” and calls upon a number of soul soothers, asking each the question, “What must I do to be cured of my sin?”

First of all we will stop at the office of:

Dr. Atheist — In appearance he is bold, brazen, self-conceited and he has a contemptuous sneer on his face. He has been taught by Dr. Evolution and Dr. Skeptic. He diagnoses the trouble as “the remains of animalism.” He would have the patient believe that man is a machine, rather than a responsible moral being and that what he does is merely the outworking of the inflexible laws of nature.

Dr. Atheist prescribes “Negation Pills” — no God, no Christ, no Heaven, no hell, no future judgment. He declares that death ends all; that there is nothing beyond; that man dies like a beast. He follows the pills with “Eat, Drink and Be Merry Therapy,” enjoining his patient to enjoy life while he still has it.

Adjacent to his office is that of:

Dr. Agnostic — He is more refined and less harsh in his treatment, respecting somewhat the feelings of his visitor. His chief prescription is a “Don’t Know” dose of “Uncertainty Tonic.” He agrees that there may be a God and a future life, but affirms that such things are beyond our ability to ascertain.

Next we come to the well-furnished office of:

Dr. No-Sin — He is a graduate of a certain metaphysical college, once located in an Eastern City. He tries to argue his patient out of his pain. He prescribes “Can’t Sin Salve” and “No Error Ointment.” These are followed by a liberal application of “No Death Vanishing Cream.”

The Word of God tells us, “Fools make a mock at sin” (Prov. 14:9). What consummate folly to deny the facts of sin, suffering and death!

Next we come to the well-filled office of:

Dr. No-hell — He applies “All-healing Balm” discovered by Dr. Doubt and manufactured in the “Carnal Mind Pharmaceutical Plant.” The widest distributors of this miracle drug are a group professing to be “True Witnesses” from Modernistic Theological Seminaries.

Still another Quack Doctor of the Soul is:

Dr. Second Chance — He comes from the “Larger Hope Hospital.” His favourite opiate is the “False Hope Hypodermic” together with “Anti-Heartache Powders.”

Let us remember the Bible makes no mention of a second chance after death. On the contrary it says, “It is appointed unto men, once to die but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

In close proximity to this office is that of:

Dr. Universalist and Dr. Restorationist — These are old college chums in practice together. They give “Just a Little Hell Bitters” and “Save-All Syrup” interspersed with “Cure-All Capsules.”

Doctors No-hell, Second Chance, Universalist and Restorationist all administer “Pain-Killing Opiates”

which dull the spiritual sensibilities but neither cure nor help the sin-grieved soul.

Some patients turn to:

Dr. New Thought — He has a small but lucrative practice. He is noted for his “Spark of Divine” pills and “Universal Spirit Lotion.”

Then there is:

Dr. Legality — He is very stern and harsh, but he has a large practice. His office is always crowded by anxious sufferers. He deals in “Tablets of the Law” in ten doses. But “by the law is the knowledge of sin” not the cure.

One often called in for consultation by Dr. Legality is:

Dr. Save-Self — His Alma Mater is the celebrated “Morality Medical College” where he was classmate of the distinguished “Ego-Therapists” Dr. Reputation and Dr. Respectability. Dr. Save-Self recommends a “Reducing Diet” with “Self-Surgery Exercises.” But remember “None … can … redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him” (Psa. 49: 7).

Next we see:

Dr. Ritualist — He has a very ornate office with equipment both ancient and modern. For “the sincere milk of the Word,” he substitutes “Tradition Tablets.” He makes much of “Ecclesiastical Manipulations, Sacramentals, Public Piety Plasters, Right Rays and Formalistic Ferments.” All are equally useless in combatting sin.

Dr. Legality, Dr. Save-Self and Dr. Ritualist are all members of the “Natural State Examining Board,” and are leading consultants at “Good Works Hospital” and

the celebrated “Proud Heart Polyclinic.” They either inspire a vain hope or leave their patient exhausted by self-exertion.

We now reach the office of:

Dr. Fatalist — He prefers “What Is to Be Will Be Liniment” and “Creature of Circumstances Capsules.” He employs “Behaviouristic Psychology Light Beams” and has been known to dispense a “False Compound of Predestination, Self-deception and Carnality.”

Near the cemetery is the gloomy office of:

Dr. Hopeless — He has a thin, pale death-like face. His prescriptions are large does of “Too Late, Too Bad, Sinned Away Your Day of Grace” medicine. He suggests a “Final Fling Poultice” skilfully compounded of “Fleshly Lusts” and “Carnal Delights.”

Finally we visit:

Dr. Procrastination — He has a varied clientele. He is very cheerful and often jests with his patients. His specialty is “Plenty of Time Pills,” but the difficulty is, he cannot control time and is likely to run out of medicine at the critical moment.

From the counterfeits let us turn to the genuine:

The Great Physician — The Lord Jesus Christ — His office is at the corner of “Scripture Street” and “Grace Way.” It is readily recognized by the Cross on the door which is always open. No one ever comes and finds the “Doctor Out.” The door is entered by the “Step of Faith.”

The Great Physician has a perfect knowledge of every case. He needs no X-ray to discover what is inside His patient. He always makes a correct diagnosis and

prescribes the proper therapy. He has a remedy for every illness no matter how severe or long duration. It is a remedy provided at “Calvary” and is the “Remedy of Redemption,” purchased by His own precious blood.

Our Physician has the unique record of never having lost a patient; none is beyond His power to heal. Moreover, His services are absolutely free for “The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

So we see that only the Great Physician can meet the need of the sin-sick soul.

“The worst of all diseases

Is light compared with sin;

On every part it seizes,

But rages most within.

‘Tis palsy, plague and fever

And madness all combined;

And none but a believer

The least relief can find.’

Never Man Spake Like This Man (Aug-Sept 1966)

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George M. Landis

John's Gospel 7:31 reads: "And many of the people believed on Him, and said, When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this Man hath done?" Then follows the attempt of the Pharisees to arrest Jesus and on their return empty-handed, verse 45 continues. "Then came the officers to the chief priest and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought Him? And the officers answered, Never man spake like this Man."

Instead of arresting Jesus as commanded, the officers were arrested by His wonderful utterances. They were impressed by His words as well as His works — His miracles. Notice they did not say, "He was so strong, we were unable to arrest Him" or "was so well-armed we were afraid to arrest Him." Instead, their reason was that He spoke as no other man had ever spoken. I am sure this is the only time such a reason has been given for failure to apprehend an offender of the law.

Let us consider some features of the arresting words of the Lord Jesus.

Spoke With Originality

Humanly speaking Jesus was untaught. Nazareth was not a university town. He had not sat at the feet of a great teacher such as Gamaliel; nor at the feet of a great Gentile philosopher such as Plato. Hence the Scribes,

Sadducees and Pharisees aware of the high cost of their own education exclaimed, “How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?” (v.15). A carpenter shop had been His academy but He left the workbench to display a wisdom that amazed His hearers.

His teaching was contrary to much of the accepted tenents of His time. The Jews were looking for a Messiah who would break the Roman yoke and restore the glory of the dynasty of David. But this Man made no attempt to incite rebellion against the reigning Caesar. Hence the scorning Scribes, the skeptical Sadducees, the hpyocritical Pharisees, the ascetic Essenes, and the politcally-minded Herodians had no use for Christ or His message. They had forgotten the prophecies of a suffering Messiah but thought only of the “glories that should follow” i.e. His millennial reign.

His theology was contrary to the concepts of the great religious leaders of the past. He condemned idolatry in all its forms. His message of hope and assurance is the antithesis of Buddah’s gospel of despair. How His gospel of grace differs from the elaborate code of ethics and morals devised by Confucius! Nor did He speak as Socrates, Plato and Seneca, the Greek and Roman philosophers.

He Spoke With Authority

Philosophers in their search for truth are said to have concluded, “There is nothing certain but uncertainty.” The human mind is skilled in raising questions which it cannot answer. It has been said, “Man’s wisdom maps the frontiers of human knowledge very nicely, but makes small advance into the territory of mystery.”

On the other hand, there never was any uncertainty in the teaching of the Lord Jesus. “He did not argue: He announced. He never stops to prove: He proclaims.”

The Old Testament prophets prefaced their utterances with such expressions as: “Thus saith the Lord” or “The Lord spoke.” Jesus begins with, “Verily, verily,” or “Truly, truly, I say unto you.” Moses was recognized by the Jews as the greatest teacher of the Old Testament, but the Lord Jesus claimed to be greater than Moses, greater than Jonah, greater than the Sabbath and greater than the temple. He was greater than John the Baptist, who heralded His ministry. Yet, no teacher has been so maligned and so misunderstood. Men did not like to hear what He had to say because, “they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

Would you know truth? Jesus said, “I am the Truth” and “he that is of the truth heareth My voice” (John 18:31). Being God, manifest in the flesh, He spoke as God, the supreme authority. It is incumbent on us to heed His words.

He Spoke With Simplicity Yet Profoundly

His language was so simple that even a child can understand His words, yet so profound the wisest sages are still seeking to fathom the depths of its meaning. He gave the answers to questions asked through the centuries. Consider these:

“Is there a God?” Yes, for He said, “I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God” (John 20:17).

“If there is a God, can a man know Him?” The Lord answers, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” This in response to Philip’s request, “Show us the Father and it sufficeth us” (John 14:8).

“Has God forgotten the world?” No, for we read, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John. 3:16).

“Does God judge sinners?” Christ’s reply is, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22).

“Will God punish sinners?” Heed His words, “If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43, 44).

“Can sinners escape this doom?” Again yes, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

“Does this mean that sins can be forgiven?” True, for the Man who spake as never man spake said, “The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins” (Matt. 9:6).

Finally: “Is there anything after death for those who trust Christ?” Listen to His assuring words: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1-2). Think of being with that blessed One, with all the Father’s family. Yes, there is not only something beyond, but better still Someone beyond — the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

We shall see Him in all His glory and be like Him and be with Him forever.

There are seven “I ams” of Jesus found in John’s Gospel. There are no intricate or complicated terms used, but words a child in grade one understands; yet none of us fully comprehend what they mean.

He said, “I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger” (6:35). Are you feeding your soul on this bread?

Again, “I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (8:12). Are you stumbling in darkness?

Do you feel deft outside of everything? Listen: “I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture” (10:9).

Then He said, “I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep” (10:11). This He did on the cross.

Of death He said, “I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (11:25).

Wonderful are His words, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me” (14:6). The way — the path to God is a person, even Jesus Christ.

And the final “I am,” is, “I am the True Vine” (15:1). Believers are branches from that Vine, receiving their life from Him.

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.” Will you heed the words of the Man who spake as never man

spake? Accept Him as Saviour if you have not already done so.

“Thou alone, Lord Jesus, canst true peace impart,

Thou dost know the sorrows of the human heart;

Thou Who cam’st from glory here the heart to win,

And in love for sinners, suffer’dst once for sin!

There is none Lord Jesus, there is none like Thee,

For the broken-hearted, there is none like Thee.”

The Gift of Gifts (Dec 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 10, Dec 1966.

George M. Landis

This season of the year is characterized by gifts and giving. So marked has this become, many feel commercialism has destroyed the real message and meaning of Christmas. All kinds of gifts are exchanged: cheap and expensive; vulgar and beautiful; perishable and lasting.

The Bible has much to say about this subject for the word “give” in its various forms occurs no less than two thousand and fifty-nine times in Holy Writ. Its first use is in Genesis 1:15 which reads: “And let them be for lights in the firmament of Heaven to give light upon the earth.” Its last use is by a glorified Christ saying: “And behold, I come quickly: and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12). It is interesting to note its first and last use by man. In Genesis 2:20 we have: “And Adam gave names to all cattle … to every beast of the field,” and in Revelation 19:7 the voice of a great multitude is heard saying: “Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to Him.”

Some wonderful gifts are mentioned in Scripture. To the seed of Abraham God gave the land of Canaan; the believer is given by the Father to the Son. God’s bounty is shown in Matthew 7:7 which declares, “Ask and it shall be given unto you.” God is revealed as a God of comfort in the words “He giveth His beloved sleep” (Psa. 127:2).

All of these gifts, great as they are, pale into insignificance as we contemplate God's Gift of Gifts. Of the many references to this Gift perhaps the following four stand out most significantly. First, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" John 3:16. Truly the pearl of all Scripture! Second, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4:14). Something really satisfying! Third, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life" (Rom. 6:33). The priceless prize! Fourth, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15). An unfathomable deep!

The Gift of Gifts - The Lord Jesus Christ

The Gift of Gifts is a personal gift, a Person; God the Father gave a Person, His only well-beloved Son, to persons, viz. sinners. He gave this gift to you who read these pages; to me as well.

No doubt you have given gifts which you had planned for some time. Jesus Christ is a planned gift, planned from all eternity in the counsels of God from the beginning.

Christ is, moreover, a promised gift, promised in Genesis chapter three. Four thousand years later the Gift arrived as the Babe of Bethlehem, heralded by an angelic chorus and confirmed by the visit of the Wise Men from the East. He was indeed the first and the greatest Christmas Gift.

Strange as it seems, many would destroy this most wonderful of all gifts. Herod was the first to make such

an attempt. Later the religious leaders of His time took counsel to destroy Him. His straightforward ministry roused their envy and finally they accomplished their evil designs and brought about His death.

Even now, in our enlightened age, there are those who would reject this Gift. Indeed the world-wide movement of communism despises God's gracious offer of eternal life. Many consider it beneath their dignity to recognize the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Indeed, so-called intellectuals in the professing church decry this One and lead astray those whom they should be leading to Christ. To them, as to the Greek intellectuals, "the preaching of the cross is foolishness," (1 Cor. 1:18).

Disbelief characterizes the vast majority of mankind today. Isaiah cried out in his day, "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. 53:1) and we might well echo those words in our day. The scripturally recorded facts of his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession and return are the subject of scorn and ridicule by twentieth century Pharisees in the organized churches of Christendom. There will be no atheists, as such, in hell. They will then know that they refused the Gift so freely offered to them.

Vast multitudes are ignorant of the Gift. Jesus said to the woman at Jacob's well in Sychar; "If thou knewest the Gift of God, and Who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water" (John 4:10). Millions throughout the world have never heard of this One. What a challenge to us who know Him as Christ and Lord! His message to us is, as it was when He departed

this earth, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

The ignorance of some is due to lack of apprehension. Their minds have been so darkened and dulled by sin they do not understand the simple gospel. Still others lack inclination to know. They are willfully ignorant and prefer to remain that way. Some lack interest and are unconcerned with anything but the pleasures and wealth of society. With them, business comes first and blots out everything else. They are so engrossed with the immediate future they have no thought of their eternal welfare. They don’t realize that the “pleasures of sin are but for a season” (Heb. 11:25). Even a child would not become so taken up with his old toys that he would fail to open the gifts he receives at Christmas.

Perhaps the greatest number who fail to take cognizance of the Gift are those who neglect to receive Him. They do not seek to destroy the Gift: nor are they ignorant of Him or disinterested. They simply procrastinate. They approve of Christ, speak well of Him and some day intend to accept Him as Saviour and Lord. How sad to think that these, like the despisers, rejectors and inveterate enemies of Christ will have their place in a lost Eternity! Surely at this Christmas Season, if you belong to this latter class, you will take heed and consider your final end and accept this most wonderful of all Gifts. Remember what Scripture says, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12).

“O what a gift the Father gave,

When He bestowed His Son,

To save poor, ruined, guilty man,

By sin defiled, undone!

O what a Gift! His praise shall be

Forever on my tongue,

And mine shall be the loudest praise

That ransomed soul hath sung!

Come all who trust in Jesus now,

And tell our joys abroad;

Let thankful hymns of praise ascend

For Christ, the Gift of God!” (Midlane)

Law And Grace (Aug-Sept 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1967.

George M. Landis

Text: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

Grace is ever seen in striking contrast to law. The law was given through Moses to the people Israel; grace came through Jesus Christ. Law demands righteousness; grace provides righteousness. Law requires its blessings to be earned for they are dependent upon human works; grace freely gives its richer blessings which are dependent upon faith in Christ. The law exposes what is in man’s heart, inherent sin; grace displays what is in God’s heart, infinite love. The law gives a knowledge of sin; grace gives salvation from sin. Law promises to bless the good but shows that there are none such; grace promises to save the bad who trust in Christ. The law condemns even the best; grace offers salvation even to the worst. The law is a ministration of death and condemnation; grace is a ministration of life and justification. The law shuts sinful man out from God; grace brings him into God’s presence. No man can fully keep the law, for it gives no power to perform what it demands; no one need refuse grace which gives more than the law requires, a righteousness which is Christ Himself.

The world does not understand grace. When pure grace is preached, proclaiming that the vilest sinner may be saved through faith in Christ’s atoning death, many say: “Such a doctrine gives license to sin.” This charge was

made against Paul, who some said made void the law and encouraged people to sin that grace might abound. Such objections fail to recognize that the saved sinner is born again and is possessed of a new nature which hates sin and loves righteousness.

Grace rules out all supposed human merit, giving all the glory to God who displays the grace; hence many reject it because of the inveterate pride of the sinful heart. Salvation is by grace alone.

Christ’s Condescending Love (Oct 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 8, Oct 1967.

George M. Landis

Text: “The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

True love does not think of its own things but is willing to humble itself for the good of its objects. Beholding God’s own love as revealed in Christ, we are amazed at its condescension. From the loftiest heights of glory to the deepest depths of shame and woe, He willingly stooped for us. His condescension is the more amazing when we consider the character of those for whom He stooped: strengthless, godless, rebellious, sinners. He exchanged the adoration of angels for the scoffing of sinners, the worship of seraphim for the ridicule of rebels, the praise of cherubim for the persecution of scribes and Pharisees. If you need greater evidence of His condescending love, think of the words: “who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Think of the extent of your own sin, and in spite of that He loved you. Then can you sing:

“Love sent my Saviour to die in my stead,

Why should He love me so?

Meekly to Calvary’s cross He was led,

Why should He love me so?”

(Robt. Harkness)

Though Christ was eternally in the form of God, He thought it was not a thing to be grasped after to be equal with God; but He made Himself of no reputation (i.e. emptied Himself of the visible expression of the glory of God), and took upon Him the form of a bond servant, and was found in the likeness of men (your likeness and mine apart from sin); and being found in fashion as a man, He further humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, (the most shameful form of death, reserved for the vilest of criminals). This simple, yet profound record of Philippians chapter two, from which we have quoted, beggars description and defies exposition. Never can we know the depths of His condescension until we can realize the heights from which He descended.

The Infallible Bible (Nov 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 9, Nov 1968.

George M. Landis

Text: Thy Word is true from the beginning" (Psa. 119:60).

Modern infidelity, under the pretentious guise of advanced scholarship, has done much to shake the faith of this generation in the authority of God's Word. Many who fill professor's chairs and some prominent pulpits are very open in their attacks upon the inspiration of the Scriptures. What was once the argument of the infidel is now "the final dictum of an agreed scholarship." The enemies of the Bible cannot destroy that wonderful Book, but they can destroy the confidence of many in the Bible, so that they turn from its message of life and salvation, thereby virtually closing the gate of Heaven in their own faces.

To illustrate the point: suppose I am trying to find my way in a strange area by following what claims to be an official map. As I pause to examine the map, a stranger approaches and says: "My friend, surely you are not so foolish as to consult that obsolete and unreliable map? Do you not know that it was printed by a deluded man who himself did not know the directions?

No one consults it any more save a few simple-minded women and children and a few people now in their dotage. I urge you to discard it at once." Then I follow this stranger's advice only to discover that I am hopelessly lost. I ask you, did this stranger's denial change one word or direction on the map? Did it remove

one mile of highway or destroy a single bridge? No, nothing was changed or destroyed except my faith in the map. And I would be the one to suffer for believing the stranger's lie instead of the map.

"May we read these Scriptures,

And their truth believe,

Own our need as sinners,

And God's Son receive;

In assurance resting,

His commands obey,

And in His grace growing,

Live for Him each day."

—A. P. Gibbs