

Words of Faith

THE NEWSLETTER OF FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Volume 2, Issue 1

January—March 2002

*“The word is near
you; it is in your
mouth and in
your heart,” that
is, the word of
faith we are
proclaiming...
—Romans 10:8*

Christmas program plays to full house

The 2001 Christmas program at Faith Presbyterian Church played to a standing-room-only audience on Sunday, December 23.

Themed “Angels We Have Heard on High,” the program, written by our own Joan Smith, managed to compress the entire Christmas story into a little over an hour, and the temple at Jerusalem, the stable at Bethlehem, and the entire cast of characters, including two sheep and one donkey, into the confines at the front of the church.

The story unfolded under the watchful eyes and running commentary of a foursome of perky angels, who appeared at key points during the program high above the proceedings, in the sky midway between the pews and the church rafters. Pondering God’s plan for humanity, they discussed the birth of His Son and came to understand the ordering of divinely-ordained events as they unfolded on earth.

The junior choir sang “Hark Now, O Shepherds,” the fourth-grade girls “Joyfully Sing, Welcome the King,” and the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade girls “Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus.” Fourth through eighth-grade boys rendered “Good Christian Men Rejoice,” the first, second, and third graders “The Prophets Came” and “While Shep-

herds Watched Their Flocks,” and the junior high girls “Carol of the Angels,” followed by the girls quartet with “Mary’s Lullaby.” Then came the 2, 3, and 4 year-olds, combined with the kindergarten class, who appeared as a host of very small angels, in white robes with red and gold halos, singing (or attempting to) “Away In A Manger.”

For the finale all of the classes combined for a performance of “Around the Throne of God in Heaven” (written by Anne Shepherd in 1836), after which cookies and punch were served in the narthex.

*Around the throne of God in heaven
thousands of children stand
children whose sins are all forgiv’n
a holy, happy band.*

Singing glory, glory, glory be to God on high.



Calendar

February 13th

Ash Wednesday, Lent begins

March 24th

Palm Sunday

March 29th

Good Friday
Worship Service at 7:00 pm

March 31st

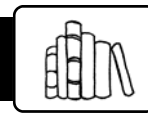
Easter Sunday

With this issue we resume publication of the church newsletter, which was so capably started by Elliot Shelden and his staff in the summer of 1999.

We hope to come out quarterly, as before, and will endeavor to inform and to explain the congregational life of Faith Presbyterian Church of Tacoma. We welcome your ideas, comments, and suggestions.

Ron Boydston, Editor

Lessons of Faith



Biblical Worship

By Rev. Robert Rayburn

In previous articles I made the point that the worship of the Lord's people together on the Lord's Day is a great engine of the Christian life. It is Sunday worship's influence over our daily living that explains the great deal of attention that is paid to its regulation and its reformation in the Bible. Christians will be, to some significant degree, what their Sunday worship makes them to be. Then I described our "liturgy" here at FPC. Our worship service contains various elements, some representing God's Word to us or action toward us (e.g. the call to worship, the absolution or assurance of pardon, the sermon, and, His feeding us at the table) and some our response to God (e.g. praise and thanksgiving, prayer, offering, coming to the Lord's Table to eat and drink). These elements, all taught and illustrated in the Bible as belonging to the worship of God's people, are then placed in a gospel or covenantal order. The importance of order in worship is also taught in the Bible. A proper order makes our worship *dialogical* with God speaking to us and we responding to him. This makes our worship, every Sunday, not only the recapitulation and renewal of our covenant with the Lord, but also the practice of our relationship with God.

It is a matter of great practical importance to think about our Sunday worship in this way. For, clearly, this biblical worship is not a spectator sport. It requires our full involvement at every point. You see

the necessity of involvement emphasized everywhere in the Bible. To offer but one example, in the sacrificial ritual of the Law of Moses the one bringing the sacrifice was fully involved in making it. Read Leviticus 1:3-9 and note how much the worshipper himself or herself *does*. A recent book on worship was entitled *Worship is a Verb*. True worshippers are never spectators in the Bible! They are either listening to God with that rapt attention that the Almighty deserves, or they are speaking to him with reverence, gratitude, and joy, or they are coming to participate in the feast the Lord Jesus sets for us at His table.

Here at Faith we have worked to be sure that at every point we are active participants in our worship. We sing together, we pray together (either by using a written prayer or by adding our "Amen" to prayer offered on our behalf by one of our number – these are the two methods of corporate prayer taught in the Bible and we employ them both), we read God's Word together aloud. The postures we assume for prayer and praise – standing, kneeling, and the raising of hands – all serve to effect and emphasize our personal participation. They also serve to cultivate the proper states of mind and heart that sincere involvement requires: reverence, humility, boldness, and a living sense of *coram Deo*, that we are in the very presence of God and are speaking directly to Him. The short introductions to the various elements in the service that are provided by the

minister ("rubrics") are also designed continually to remind the congregation that they are doing nothing less than speaking to God or hearing Him speak.

Nothing creates more vitality in a worship service, nothing adds more power to its witness to unbelievers present, nothing is better calculated to carry believers participating in that worship up into "the sanctuary of the Most High," than for the entire congregation to be personally, eagerly, sincerely, joyfully, and reverently participating from beginning to end.

As with everything else in the Christian life, so with worship, faith is required above all things. We must *believe* that God is present to receive our worship as he promises to be in his Word. Otherwise a worship service becomes merely a meeting of Christians. But, when a congregation of Christians practices its faith in the presence of God, when believers *know* that "the Lord is enthroned on the praises of Israel," (Psalm 22:3) – when they are sure that their worship is a throne for God and not a platform for man – every element in the service is supercharged with meaning, with privilege, and with sanctity. David was a man with a strong faith in God's presence with his people when they gathered for worship in his house. No wonder he should have said, "One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple." (Psalm 27:4)



Local Events



High schoolers offer Renaissance and classical treasures

The banners on the walls looked down, the audience looked forward, and the music looked back over several centuries, at the 9th annual Covenant High School Christmas concert on December 13 and 14.

Some four dozen CHS singers and musicians, directed by Florence Rayburn, gave back-to-back nightly performances with an hour and 20 minute presentation entitled "Christ is Born!"

Following a prelude featuring piano selections by several students, the concert opened with the "Antiphonal Alleluia" from G.F. Handel's "Occasional Oratorio," with the choir bracketing the audience. Offerings by the madrigal choir and chamber choir included excerpts from Vivaldi's "Gloria," Pegolesi's "Alleluia," Rutter's

"Candlelight Carol," Wilhousky and Leontovich's "Carol of the Bells," and Tchaikovsky's "Russian Trepak" from the Nutcracker.

*Candlelight, angel light, firelight and starglow
Shine on his cradle till breaking of dawn*

*Gloria, gloria in excelsis deo!
Angels are singing; the Christ child is born.*

After an intermission the program switched gears, and the participants their costumes, as they traded in their bow ties and blouses for Elizabethan garb. The madrigal choir sang its way through selections from Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors, a delightfully nutty rendition of Hagemann and Leka's "Fruitcake," Grant/Rutter's "A Banquet Fugue," Walton's "What Cheer?" and the spiritual "Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow." The cham-

ber choir performed the French carol "Les Anges Dans Nos Compagnes," and the covenant choir Martens/Yon's "Gesu Bambino." The program closed with a rendition of Wesley/Mendelssohn's "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," and was followed by refreshments upstairs and a display of student artwork downstairs.

*Now the King of heaven his birth hath take
Joy and mirth we ought to make;*

*Say each to other, for his sake: "What cheer?
What cheer?"*

... Be merry and glad this good New Year!



Sanctity of Life Sunday observed on January 20

Sanctity of Life Sunday was observed at Faith on January 20, with remarks given at the morning services by Janis Hanson, staff member at the Crisis Pregnancy Centers of Pierce County.

She stated that the CPC staff had seen more than 4600 clients during the calendar year 2001, and that more than 7000 telephone calls had been received by the centers.

Of the more than 400 women who had undergone ultrasounds, 95% had elected to keep their babies rather than pursue abortion.

Hanson observed that while much coverage had been given to the victims of the air crashes on September 11, virtually no coverage had been given to the more than 4000 babies who were killed that day at abortion clinics all over the United States.

She also outlined the ongoing efforts that the centers are making to promote abstinence among students in public and private schools in the county. Presentations were given in more than half the school districts in Pierce County in 2001, challenging teens to turn their culture

around and to committing themselves to responsible behavior and healthy, lasting marriages.

The Crisis Pregnancy Centers in Pierce County are part of a nationwide network of 2500 pregnancy centers across America.



Church History

Constantine (c 272-337): Defender of the Church

By Richard Hannula

condensed from *Trial & Triumph: Stories from Church History*

(Canon Press, 1999)

In 299, Emperor Diocletian ordered the Great Persecution and shattered a long period of peace for the Christian church. Believing that Christians angered the pagan gods, Diocletian sought to destroy Christianity once and for all. He demanded that everyone in the empire sacrifice to the pagan gods or risk loss of property, imprisonment, or death. The emperor's men tore down churches and confiscated Scriptures, burning them in the middle of public squares. They jailed Christian leaders and subjected them to flogging, the rack, and tortures of every kind; many were butchered with the sword, drowned in the sea, devoured by wild animals, or cast into fire.

When Diocletian left the throne in 305, the persecutions eased but did not end. For years, prominent men battled for control of the empire. In the West, it came down to two commanders, Maxentius and Constantine. Maxentius, who was distrustful of Christians, controlled Rome and Italy. Challenging his rule was Constantine, supporter of Christianity, who in 312 crossed the Alps with his army and began a march of conquest. Forbidding his men to plunder captured cities, he won the support of the Italian people.

One day, as the army marched south, the sun formed a cross of light in the sky. Constantine be-

In 337, with his health failing and at the age of sixty-five, Constantine requested baptism.

lieved he saw the words, "By This Conquer," under the cross and took it as a sign from God. As he slept that night he dreamed Christ appeared to him with the same cross of light he had seen in the sky, and in the dream Christ commanded him to make a likeness of the sign and use it as a safeguard in battle. This likeness became the military standard carried into battle at the head of Constantine's forces.

When Constantine displayed the standard to his army and described his dream, the soldiers rejoiced. Inspired by the confidence of their commander, they believed they could not fail. He ordered his men to paint crosses on their shields, and they set out to do battle with the enemy.

Maxentius made his stand nine miles from Rome on a flat, low-lying plain on the Tiber River. To block Constantine's way to Rome, he destroyed the Milvian Bridge, an ancient multi-arched bridge of stone. In its place, his army built a bridge of wooden boats linked together with iron chains which could quickly be broken apart if the en-

emy tried to cross the river.

Maxentius, outfitted in armor, placed his cavalry on either side and massed his infantry in the center of the plain. Constantine rode at the head of his cavalry and charged headlong into the enemy's horsemen, hurling them back in disarray. They battled fiercely and pressed Maxentius' army to the river bank. Fleeing soldiers, including Maxentius, rushed across the boat bridge, which collapsed under their weight. Hundreds drowned, unable to stay afloat with their heavy military gear. Maxentius was among them. The citizens of Rome threw open the gates and welcomed Constantine, hailing him emperor of Rome.

He broke from Roman tradition by refusing to offer a sacrifice to Jupiter at the Capitol. One of his first acts as emperor forever freed Christians from Roman persecution. In a decree known as the Edict of Milan, Constantine granted all men freedom to follow whichever religion they chose. The edict also called for the return of property confiscated from Christians during the Great Persecution and the rebuilding of destroyed churches at government expense.

Later, Constantine declared Sunday a legal holiday, making Christian worship on the Lord's Day possible for everyone. He exempted church property and salaries from taxes, and appointed Christians to high-ranking posts. For the first time, an emperor was a friend, a defender of

(Continued on page 5)

Church History, continued

(Continued from page 4)

the church. “I sought,” Constantine said, “to draw the human race to observe the holy laws of God and prosper our most holy faith under the guidance of His Almighty hand.” He donated land and large sums of money to the church, and began a massive church building program.

Above all, he sought to promote the peace and unity of the church. When strife broke out in Alexandria over the teachings of Arius, who said that Christ was created by the Father and inferior to Him, Constantine called a church council to decide the issue and make clear the church’s teaching, for a few years earlier two separate church meetings had reached different conclusions regarding Arius and his beliefs. Three hundred bishops and hundreds of other churchmen attended the council at Nicea on the Black Sea. Constantine paid all the expenses to bring this about.

For two months, the men debated the place of Christ in the Trinity and other important teachings. Often Constantine sat in the sessions and joined in the discussion. In the end, the council decided the Bible taught that Christ was not inferior to the Father but was equal in power and glory with the Father and the Spirit. They wrote a creed summarizing basic Christianity. Constantine enthusiastically supported the creed, believing it to be true to Scripture and helpful in uniting the church.

But Constantine’s influence in the church was not always positive. He assumed the power of appointing

and dismissing bishops and exiling men who did not follow his instructions, including Athanasius, the great defender of the faith. He called church councils on his own authority, and his strong hand in church affairs led many Christians to look to the emperor for guidance instead of the leaders of the church. The wealth he brought to the church corrupted many ministers who loved riches more than Christ. Before long, church offices were being bought and sold for the power and riches that came with them.

In 337, with his health failing and at the age of sixty-five, Constantine requested baptism. Laying aside his imperial clothes, he confessed his faith in Christ when he answered the baptism questions. “Do you believe in God the Father Almighty and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born by the Holy Spirit from the Virgin Mary, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and died, and rose again on the third day from the dead, and ascended to the heavens, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?” After the priest baptized him with water, he put on a white robe, traveled to a villa in the country, and died a few days later.

Constantine’s embrace of Christianity affected the church in tremendous ways. The protection he granted and the wealth he lavished upon her brought many unforeseen changes to Christian life and worship. For centuries, some Christians have questioned the genuineness of Constantine’s faith. Some think he

used Christianity to strengthen his hand in ruling the empire, and they point out deceitful and ruthless actions he did while emperor. Others believe that Constantine, despite his many shortcomings, put his trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. In this life, we will never know for sure. Perhaps Constantine himself said it best: “I myself await the judgment of Christ.”



In 330, Constantine moved the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, which was rebuilt as Constantinople. It was renamed Istanbul in 1930, and is in the modern day nation of Turkey.

Reflections



Drop, Drop Heavy Tears

By Anne Stopoulos

Drop, drop heavy tears,
Never cease to fall;
For grave has been
Your people's sin;
They in destruction crawl.

Drop, drop heavy tears,
Do not be consoled;
Of life bereft
All splendor left;
Now gone are days of old.

Drop, drop heavy tears,
God against you stands;
With anger fierce
His people pierced,
And cast them from the land.

Drop, drop heavy tears,
Who will come and heal?
Your virgins die,
Your infants cry,
And young men lose their zeal.

Drop, drop heavy tears,
Sink in hopeless fear;
Know no sleep;
Sharp vigil keep,
Till mercy meets you there.

Drop then joyful tears,
You seek not in vain;
Christ's cross appears:
Away with fear!
For you the Son was slain.

—*Anne Stopoulos is a junior at
Covenant High School*

We live in an enlightened age that is too sophisticated and scientific to believe in hell and too busy to think about sin. Or, rather, our age is busily reconciling people to their sins and not to their God.

—Edna Hong in *The Downward Ascent*.

A man may have prodigious learning, and yet never be saved. He may be master of half the languages spoken round the globe. He may be acquainted with the highest and deepest things in heaven and earth. He may have read books till he is like a walking cyclopaedia. He may be familiar with the stars of heaven, the birds of the air, the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea. He may be able, like Solomon, to “speak of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows on the wall, of beasts also, and fowls, and creeping things, and fishes” (I Kings 4:33). He may be able to discourse of all the secrets of fire, air, earth, and water. And yet, if he dies ignorant of Bible truths, he dies a miserable man. Chemistry never silenced a guilty conscience. Mathematics never healed a broken heart. All the

sciences in the world never smoothed down a dying pillow. No earthly philosophy ever supplied hope in death. No natural theology ever gave peace in the prospect of meeting a holy God. All these things are of the earth, earthy, and can never raise a man above the earth's level. They may enable a man to strut and fret his little season here below with a more dignified gait than his fellow mortals, but they can never give him wings, and enable him to soar towards heaven. He that has the largest share of them will find at length that without Bible knowledge he has got no lasting possessions. Death will make an end of all his attainments, and after death they will do him no good at all.

—J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), Bishop of Liverpool, Church of England

New Member Spotlight



By Ron Boydston

JOHN & BRENDA GRONEWOLD

have returned to Faith after a 7-year absence, during which a job transfer took them to Portland, Oregon. For 15 years John was an executive at a non-profit organization, then changed careers and now is a store manager at a pool and spa company. Brenda is mom to Erika, Alexandra, Joel, Aaron and Heidi. They like to camp, and for the last several summers (even while in Portland) have joined several other church families at Banks Lake in eastern Washington for an annual get-together. They have family connections here: John grew up at Faith, and is the son of Joe and Barbara Gronewold; while Brenda, along with Carol Pribyl and Nancy Miller, is sister to Ken Kvale.

CHAD ISENBERGER installs sprinkler systems for a fire protection company, lives in Lakewood, and grew up in Puyallup, where he graduated from Rogers High School. He plays guitar and also snowboards, and is related circuitously to both the Kvales and Pribyls – he is Ken Kvale’s mother’s brother’s son’s son.

CLAY & KATY JOHNSON have two grown children and a college-age son (Todd) who attends TCC. Clay is a computer programmer at Weyerhaeuser, and Katy is a public school teacher in Tacoma. One of their favorite pastimes is visiting the Faith web site, from which they have downloaded a good many of Rob’s sermons.

MICHAEL LEE and son **ANDREW** are on opposite sides of the educational fence. Michael is an educational assistant working with special ed kids in the Tumwater school district, while Andrew is a 9th-grader at Covenant High School. Michael has been married to Diana (already a member) for a year and a half, and when they go camping they pull a 23-foot travel trailer.

MAX LEFEBVRE attends massage school in Tacoma and also works as a personal trainer at a gym in West Seattle. He holds an undergraduate degree in nutrition from Bastyr University, and is hoping to study naturopathic medicine. He is the son of Jim and Shari Roland.

CRAIG & SARAH MORSE are also recycled members – they were married at Faith and attended for six years, from 1986 to 1992. Craig is a network design engineer doing contract work for Weyerhaeuser, and has graduate degrees from Western Reformed Seminary in Tacoma and Covenant Seminary in St. Louis, MO. They have four children – Elijah, Isaac, Alyson, and Luke (Sarah homeschools the two oldest) – with another on the way. A current of cowboy runs through this family: Craig says that “having a pickup and a horse is the closest thing to heaven here on earth,” and they have one of each.

DOUG & KIMBERLY REIS are both teachers, he at Emerald Ridge High School in Puyallup, Kimberly until recently at Concordia Lutheran in Tacoma; she is currently directing the school play at Covenant High School. They’re also both musicians (Kimberly plays the cello and Doug the accordion, piano, and guitar), cooks, Tolkien fans, would-be boaters (“We like boats but don’t have one”), and someday hope to travel to Europe.

PETER ROWAN attends Western Washington University in Bellingham, majoring in business and French. A 1999 graduate of Covenant High School, he spent a year studying in France, and is the son of Ken and Nancy Rowan.

KEVIN & AMY SLACK met at Bob Jones University, were married there, and came to Tacoma in 1986. They have two sons, 20-year-old Daniel and 11-year-old Tommy, and Kevin was a graphic designer and MacIntosh consultant up until a year ago, when he suffered a stroke, from which he is slowly recovering. They are also on their second enlistment at Faith, having been members here some 12 years ago.

BRANDON & DENISE WELCH are mail carriers – Brandon in Seattle and Denise in Auburn, where they also live. Parents to Michaela, Gage, and Avery, they also like to ski, golf, and travel. Denise’s parents worked in Saudi Arabia during her high school years, and she attended boarding school in Switzer-

(Continued on page 8)

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Faith Presbyterian Church
620 South Shirley Street
Tacoma, Washington 98465

Phone: 253-752-7601

Fax: 253-752-5992

E-mail: fpc@faithtacoma.org

Web: <http://www.faithtacoma.org>



New Member Spotlight, continued

(Continued from page 7)

land for three years since her school in the Middle East only went through grade 9. Although he has never lived in the midwest, Brandon is a tried-and-true fan of the Chicago Bears.

DWAIN & LINDA WIER came to a reformed perspective via the ministry of R.C. Sproul, and are parents to two grown sons. Dwain retired from Tacoma City Light in 1997 as a protective grid specialist, and now works in the pro shop at Ft. Steila-coom Golf Course. Linda, a nursing grad from the University of Texas, still works occasionally as a nurse, but for the past five years has pursued a hobby of jewelry-making.

She also holds a graduate degree from Western Reformed Seminary in Tacoma.

Also joining as members are the following children: Christopher Eddy, son of Tom and Lorelei Eddy; Karl Kvale, son of Ken & Wendy Kvale; Margaret Lewellen, daughter of Jeff and Jane Lewellen; Matthew Pfefferle, son of Mike and Connie Pfefferle; Juliana Rowan, daughter of Ken and Nancy Rowan; and Abigail St. John, daughter of Ned and Kim St. John.



Sermons preached at Faith are available via download from the church website, on audio tape, and in printed form through the church office.

To request sermon tapes, please contact Eunice DeSoto or call the church office at (253) 752-7601. The tapes are available for a suggested donation of \$2 each.



Biblical Faith



The Apostle Paul, William Hone, and Etta Linneman: Witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ

By Rev. Robert Rayburn

The life of the Apostle Paul was one of the great adventures in the history of the world. He traveled the world with the good news that sinful men could find peace with God and obtain eternal life by faith in Jesus. It was a message that transformed the lives of great multitudes of people, and Christian churches were established by Paul in many cities of the imperial world. By the time Paul died, Christianity - which no one had heard of a few years before - was a force to reckoned with in the world of that day.

But it was also a controversial message. Paul had hated it at one time in his life and had despised all who embraced it. And there were many who felt about Christianity the way Paul had before he became a Christian. They greeted his ministry with disgust, with active opposition, and with open hatred. On a number of occasions he was whipped, once he was stoned, he was arrested and imprisoned, and flogged by Roman authorities several times, all because of the message he preached.

There is hardly any better evidence, any more persuasive proof of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead than the transformation of the life of Saul of Tarsus. This has long been understood both by the friends and the enemies of the Christian faith. The enemies have known that they had somehow to explain the Apostle Paul and the

remarkable transformation of his life and the ministry that followed. No serious historian of that period doubts the historicity of Paul or his ministry or that we have his message in his letters. No one doubts that there was a remarkable transformation, that the persecutor of Christians became their champion or that Paul himself explained the change as a result of his having encountered the risen Christ himself. So the enemies of the Christian faith have proposed counter explanations just as they have proposed counter explanations for the accounts of the resurrection itself.

But not a one of those explanations - that he suffered an epileptic fit, or had a hallucination, or suffered sunstroke, and these acted upon a highly fervid religious mind - is seriously regarded as a really plausible explanation for the stupendous consequences that ensued from what Paul himself always claimed was an encounter between himself and Jesus on the Damascus Road. For what we must explain is the Christian Paul, his extraordinary life and teaching, all offered by him in the service of Jesus Christ whom he claimed had himself met so wonderfully.

In the middle of the 18th century there was a bright young man named George Lyttelton. A graduate first of Eton and then of Cambridge, he eventually made a life for

himself in politics. At one point he became the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the British equivalent of our Secretary of the Treasury. He was later made a Baron, and so is referred to in English history as Lord Lyttelton. He was also a poet and writer of some note, and warrants a short biography in Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets*.

Lyttelton was the son of a devout Christian father, but as a young man, educated in the rationalism of his day and running with the friends he ran with, he became himself doubtful of the truth of Christianity. But at age 38 he set out to examine the evidence for the Christian faith and did so, largely by examining the evidence for the conversion of the Apostle Paul. The result of his examination was not only that he became a convinced Christian, but also that he wrote a book, published in 1747, entitled "Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul."

Lyttelton concluded that "the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation." Samuel Johnson writes that the book was "a treatise to which infidelity has never been able to fabricate [an apparently plausible] answer." Among many other arguments, Lyttelton concluded that Saul's own nature and his upbringing could no more produce the Christian Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, than charcoal could produce snow or a river carry a boat upstream against its own current.

Biblical Faith, continued

The life and ministry and teaching of the Great Apostle, one of the titans of human history and human philosophy, perhaps the most influential merely human being who ever lived in this world, cannot be explained satisfactorily in any other way than in that way that great man explained it himself. He had seen and had heard the very Jesus Christ whose movement he was hoping to exterminate and, as a result, he became Christ's champion in the world.

Paul's former friends not only ostracized him, they tried to kill him. Instead of being the honored representative of an established religion in the imperial world, he became the bearer of a message no one had ever heard of; a message that struck Jewish ears as blasphemy (the idea that the man Jesus Christ was also God the Son) and struck the Gentiles as simply ridiculous (that the salvation of the world should depend upon the death of an obscure Jewish rabbi, who hailed from a jerkwater town on the edge of the empire, and who was executed as an afterthought by the Roman authorities). That was no religion for a self-respecting, educated Roman. Yet this was the message that Paul was now committed to giving his life to spread.

But Paul was by no means the last of Christ's outspoken and bitter enemies who would find themselves brought to heel by the Savior. William Hone was known as the "arch-blasphemer" of England in the first half of the 19th century. Hone was such an outspoken critic of Christianity and so harsh in what he said

he was actually arrested! He wrote scurrilous parodies of the Christian creeds and some of the prayers of the Church of England. You could be arrested for such things in those days. He hated Christianity and he hated Christians and did what he could to mock both.

But in the most surprising and unexpected way William Hone was suddenly and powerfully transformed by Christ's encounter with him. It was less miraculous, to be sure, than that granted to Saul on the Damascus Road, but it was just as real and the very same Jesus Christ. And the man who had spent his life doing what harm he could to the Christian faith, devoted his remaining years to preaching the message he had once sought to destroy.

Similarly, Eta Linnemann was an honored name in the world of international New Testament scholarship. She was the first woman to have gained the rank of professor in a German university divinity school and her books were typical of the German university, belittling the historicity of the New Testament. But in a wonderful and surprising turn of events she met Jesus Christ. Eta Linnemann surrendered her prestigious post and told all she met to burn her books. She is now a Christian missionary in Indonesia seeking to advance the cause of the same Jesus Christ she once sought to undermine.

Dramatic conversions like these, sudden and powerful and profound transformations of heart and life by encounter with Jesus Christ are not only great evidences of his resurrec-

tion, but also of the nature of that new life that comes to all who trust in him, who turn from themselves to Christ for hope of true life here and eternal life yet to come.

Christ will make the same difference today as he made in Saul's life long ago. He promises that he can always be found, if only a man or woman will look for him with an honest heart. You can meet Christ as surely as Paul did! And it will mean as wonderful things for you as it meant for him and, then, through you, it will mean wonderful things for others, just as it did through him.

My message to you is exactly what Paul's message was for the rest of his life, the message he traveled the world to proclaim: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst," and "Believe in the Lord Christ and you will be saved!"



Faith Presbyterian Church
620 South Shirley Street
Tacoma, Washington 98465

Phone: 253-752-7601
Fax: 253-752-5992
E-mail: fpc@faithtacoma.org
Web: <http://www.faithtacoma.org>

