

F.A.C.S. REPORT

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Dear Susan,

Thank you for your encouraging response to the series on mixed farming by covenant renewal and for sharing the way in which God has used this series to cause you to deeply reconsider and now seriously question your continuing work as a single woman serving as a missionary in rural Africa.

As a single man also in my late thirties, I also have found that there are indeed very few Biblically eligible single Christians who are interested in applying God's Word and Christ's salvation and lordship to every area of life other than their private, personal, spiritual lives.

Sadly, this is so often because they have been taught and have embraced a pietistic, dualistic notion of Christianity — a corrupted, reduction of true Biblical Christianity — and have failed to take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:3-5). How important it is to heed Paul's warning: "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." (Colossians 2:8).

Dualistic Christianity

A pervasive aspect of dualistic Christianity is the notion that creation is inherently evil, and that eternity does not consist of the material world. Such a premise and an assertion originate in pagan Greek philosophy. The Bible on the other hand, has a resurrectional view of eternity which involves a material body and a new earth.

Furthermore, Biblically speaking, man is fallen, not the creation or the world. With the coming of the New Covenant, the cursed world is now cleansed. The curse imposed by God in Genesis 3:17-19 is now judicially and definitively removed from the soil. Its effects are progressively rolled back when God's people faithfully transform their lives, institutions, and environments to conform to God's revealed laws.

The Bible affirms that we can legitimately expect a reduction in the curse as a result of Christ's resurrection and the progressive application of Christ's redemption in history. Yet sadly, Christians who affirm that Adam's fall and sin affected every area of life — and that

A Reply to Susan: A Missionary Called Home

by Angus R. McGillivray

there is, therefore, no area of life exempt from the judgement of God and thus in need of Christ's atonement — fail to concomitantly affirm and Biblically apply the implications of Christ's resurrection to every area of life.

I am, therefore, pleased to learn that you are finding David Chilton's book, *Paradise Restored* to be so helpful. It is indeed an excellent study on a Biblical theology and eschatology of dominion. Concerning the comprehensiveness of Christ's resurrection, I would also encourage you to read Kenneth L. Gentry's, *The Greatness of the Great Commission* and Gary North's, *Is the World Running Down? Crisis in the Christian Worldview*, both of which are published by the Institute for Christian Economics, Tyler, Texas.

Comprehensive Godly Dominion

Because the New Covenant is as broad as creation and involves the redemption of all creation, Christians should affirm that Christ's redeeming blood extends to man in the totality of his created being - yes, even to the extent of his fleshly, temporal, and material reality.

John 3:16 so well reminds us that God so loved *the world* or *kosmos* that He sent His Son into the world to save the world. Here the Greek word *kosmos* indicates man in his entire cultural complexity; not the aggregate of men as isolated individuals. All human activity, whether private or public, individual or institutional, is thus under the blood of Christ. Therefore farming, like eating and drinking, must be done to God's glory: "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (I Corinthians 10:31).

Godly Desires and Gifts

Hence my desire to farm Biblically and to faithfully implement a Biblical sequence and structure of mixed arable and livestock farming that will bring the land under my stewardship from glory to glory, and in so doing, witness to the agricultural transformation wrought by the Gospel.

Such a desire is God-given, for it is consistent with God's inscripturated revelation — the Bible. It is also in accordance with what the Bible has to say about salvation and eternity; and how a Christian is to obey and thus serve God whilst living under the New Covenant but still in the Old Creation.

Similarly with your great and obvious delight in God's beautiful handiwork of creation and your consequent desire and eagerness to see it "set free from slavery to corruption" (Romans 8:21) — this is a God-given desire that is in conformity to God's inscripturated revelation of His will.

Likewise with your great love of and delight in the countryside and your desire to work with God's creation in its agricultural nuance. This is also a God-given gift that God has given you to enable you to serve Him to your utmost for His glory and His eternal purposes for His creation.

Here it is helpful to remember that even though creation was created good, it still required man to complete it and transform it in terms of God's revelation to man: "and there was no man to cultivate the ground" (Genesis 2:5b). Salvation has now restored man to his original purpose to exercise godly dominion over the whole earth — "to cultivate and keep it" (Genesis 2:15); and God has especially gifted you to exercise such dominion in the country.

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Editor: Ian Hodge

Godly Dominion and Marriage

Furthermore, He never intended you nor any person to exercise dominion alone (Genesis 2:18). Marriage was, and still is whilst we live in the Old Creation, an essential covenantal means of man being able to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." (Genesis 1:26-28). Contrary to themes associated with pietistic, dualistic Christianity, marriage is not a hindrance to man's created and redeemed purpose. Indeed, it is an asset, not a liability.

God has engineered your circumstances and experiences to enable you to discover and to develop and to know without a shadow of doubt that He has given you marital and maternal gifts. Just consider for a moment your time with the children at the mission. You know in the depth of your being that your love for and nurturing of these children was part and parcel of the gift of marriage that God has given you — a good thing that should be received with gratitude (1 Timothy 4:4).

You also know that because regeneration makes you a new creation in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17), and re-makes you in the image of God (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10), God's law is now in your heart and mind as Jeremiah 31:33 and Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16 affirm. Accordingly, you know that you can say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; Thy Law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8).

Therefore you can assuredly know that those things in which you delight that are in conformity to God's Word are gifts and desires that God has given and nurtured in you. They do not stem from selfish desires or sinful temptations and dispositions associated with your unregenerate, old nature. Godly delights, desires, and gifts are thus associated with God's will for you and God's calling on your life. They are intrinsic aspects of your calling and direct you to the nature and specifics of your calling.

Fruits of the Gospel

Moreover, they are fruits of the Gospel, rooted and grounded in what God did in Christ. They are part of the whole living process of redemptive history which finds its goal, its focus, and fulfilment in the person and work of Christ, and must, therefore, be discovered, developed, and deployed for God's glory and revealed purposes.

All of us are responsible before God to steward our abilities and gifts with the wisdom that comes from living faithfully in terms of God's Word and the work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit more and more to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness.

The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

How well you know that this process of sanctification means that we are not to live for ourselves (II Corinthians 5:15), but are, in view of God's great mercy, to offer our bodies as living and holy sacrifices and "be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2).

You also know well that this process involves the sacrifice of thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15) as God disciplines, teaches, and tests us to faithfully obey His will.

Since, therefore, you know that it is your duty and your desire to love God by obeying Him, it is imperative that you be on guard against the temptation to suppress or dismiss the knowledge of and the delight in the gifts and godly desires that God has so wonderfully blessed and nurtured in you. It is also imperative that you do not impose a dualistic interpretation on your experiences and godly delights, desires, and gifts; but rather, place them in their Biblical perspective and interpret them in terms of the Gospel.

Jesus said that we did not choose Him, but that He chose us and appointed us to bear fruit — fruit that will last (John 15:16); and that it is to His father's glory that we bear much fruit, showing ourselves to be His disciples (John 15:8).

As Christ's disciples we should, therefore, affirm that our Creator and Redeemer King has in His sovereign control engineered our circumstances and experiences to achieve His purposes in our lives for His glory. To think otherwise is to turn things around as if the potter were the clay (Isaiah 29:16).

We are not called to do a particular task or perform a particular ministry of service because it is more noble, more sacrificial, more in tune with a heavenly conception of eternity, or a more needy or spiritual cause *per se*. Saving souls as a missionary in Africa is not a better,

It is increasingly evident that the most militant threat to Christianity in the world today is Islam. Muslim militants around the globe are taking whatever steps may be necessary to establish Islamic law — the Sharia — and abolish any contenders. For the consistent Muslim, Islamic law is the only acceptable legal code for any nation.

Consequently, much of the violence in the world today is not by the communists, although the communist threat is real in some places. Much of the remaining violence is the product of jihad — holy war. "We must crush the Christians down," a statement reportedly from the head of Sudan's Arab Militia. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, in Bangladesh, in much of Africa, not to mention Afghanistan, Malaysia, and the former Soviet states of Central Asia.

In a report by Erich Bridges, published in *New Life* (11/2/93, p. 10), it was pointed out that "In southern Africa, well-funded Muslim missionary, educational and social efforts combine with aggressive pursuit of political power. The Islam in Africa conference, meeting in 1989, declared its intention not only to evangelise Africa but to ensure that only Muslims are elected to all political posts of member nations [and] to ensure the ultimate replacement of all forms of legal and judicial systems with the Sharia"

No statement better illustrates the problem with most Christian missionary work in this century. It refuses to instil a similar attitude in its converts. Man can only serve one master, not two. "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" (Mat. 6:24 NKJV). Yet for much of the Christian church, the forms that society may take are claimed to be irrelevant. Society can have whatever laws it likes, is an attitude expressed by some, although they may draw the line against homosexuality and abortion.

Islam now controls more of the earth's surface than probably at any time in its history. Its zeal and fanaticism aid in its success. So too do its prohibitions against other religions and other belief systems.

Yet, in spite of all its successes, its people are miserable and lost in their sins. "Human weakness" is no excuse for murder, rape, and other forms of hostility toward other human beings. Only the biblical account contains the true explanation and provides the true remedy for sin and its manifestations in the world.

* * * *

There's a rather appalling attempt at humour in the statement about the Indian gentlemen who declared that "The great Buddha is better than margarine." (Must be said with an attempt at an appropriate Indian accent!) But some researchers are questioning many of the claims made for margarine, especially concerning its apparent assistance in lowering the incidence of cardiovascular disease because of its effects on cholesterol levels.

more Biblical option or opportunity for godly service than working as a farmer's wife and a country mother if God has called you to be a wife and mother. "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?" (Romans 9:20-21).

John Wesley and Marriage

John Wesley had a very unhappy marriage because he neglected his Biblical duty to his wife and family. We should not excuse Wesley on the mere grounds that many were converted under his ministry. God clearly used him mightily, just as He has used many who have disobeyed and who have even high-handedly opposed Him. God's sovereignty does not excuse nor mitigate man's disobedience or irresponsibility.

Now that God is calling you home to deploy your gifts associated with being a wife and mother, the rewarding work of leading Africans out of the darkness into the light does not licence nor afford you an excuse to make soul-saving a priority over your duty to obey God's call on your life to be a wife and a mother.

God is glorified in any work that furthers His eternal plan for His creation. The work of a wife and a mother no less than the work of a missionary, in and of itself, brings glory to God and furthers His kingdom.

Furthermore, soul-saving and personal salvation or conversion is not the end; it is the first, indispensable means to the end of fulfilling God's plan for His creation. Salvation restores fallen man to a place where he can serve God as he was created to do. God has restored you and equipped you so that you might be ready to faithfully serve Him in your calling as a wife and a mother.

Your letter so clearly indicates that God has not called you to be single. Your broken-heartedness over leaving the mission children confirms that God has not given you a "gift" of celibacy. He sorely tested your faith and required you to await His timing to receive His promises — "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psalm 127:3).

Suffering, Testing, and Patience

You must be so careful to not, therefore, view your suffering in dualistic terms. Sadly, dualistic notions of Christianity have emphasized the Crucifixion almost to the exclusion of the Resurrection and Ascension and have thereby regarded suffering and self-sacrifice as yard sticks of true spirituality.

Suffering does not have power in and of itself. To choose to serve God in a particular ministry because it entails a greater degree of suffering for Christ's sake and His cause is not true Biblical spirituality. To choose to obey and do

God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. Like Jesus, we are to choose to do God's will, whether it means suffering or not.

Because suffering from a Biblical perspective is associated with testing, which in turn is part of the very nature of the requirement of faithfulness, our suffering as Christians must be interpreted in terms of God's Word.

In the epistle to the Hebrews we read that true Christians are "imitators of those who through faith and *patience* inherit the promises. For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, 'I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you.' And thus, having *patiently* waited, he obtained the promise" (Hebrews 6:12-15, emphasis added).

James B. Jordan has well commented on this passage. In his excellent essay entitled, "Rebellion, Tyranny, and Dominion in the Book of Genesis," which is published in the former Geneva Divinity School's 1983 edition of its third symposium on the issue of *Christianity and Civilization*, subtitled, *Tactics of Christian Resistance* and edited by Gary North, James Jordan has written the following:

"The recipients of the letter to the Hebrews knew that Jesus Christ had conquered Satan, and was now enthroned King of the world. They wondered why they did not yet see all things put under his feet (2:8). The answer for them was that God had sworn by Himself an oath that they would in time inherit the promise, and thus that they should be patient and await its realization. Thus the preeminent quality of faith is trust in God that He will accomplish His promise (ch.11). Just as Jesus was perfected through wisdom-inducing suffering (2:10), so Christians must patiently endure suffering until they are ready to be invested with authority and dominion (ch.12)."

True Faith and the Robes of Office

Testing, therefore, involves not just sheer obedience to a command from God, but also patience and hope of reward; for "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). We must faithfully await God's consummation of the gifts and promises that He has inaugurated.

Just because someone is aware that God has given them a gift does not mean that they can therefore utilize it and enjoy the fruits of that gift when and how they choose. God will usually first test them and engineer circumstances and experiences whereby they acquire the Biblical wisdom and Christian maturity to exercise that gift for His glory.

In the butter-margarine comparison it is often thought that butter has higher saturated fat content while margarine contains polyunsaturated fats. While margarine starts in this manner, in the manufacturing process the polyunsaturated fats are reacted with hydrogen to make the product more solid. However, the hydrogenation process itself can turn the polyunsaturated fats into saturated fats. (Some varieties of peanut butter are put through the hydrogenation process to make the product more solid. Those varieties that tend to have no peanut oil on top have probably been put through this process.)

Cholesterol is transported through the bloodstream by low density lipoproteins (LDLs) and by high density lipoproteins (HDLs). Whereas the LDLs tend to leave their cholesterol in the bloodstream, HDLs help to remove it. Thus, the aim in cholesterol management is to make sure there is an adequate HDLs to counter the influence of LDLs. This is not always appreciated in the treatment of cholesterol, and attempts are made to reduce LDL levels which, at the same time, also lower HDL levels. Since the levels of both LDLs and HDLs is important, treatment should involve making sure the level of HDL is increased or at least maintained, not reduced. Thus, it is possible to reduce cholesterol in the blood stream by increasing the HDL levels, not by reducing the LDL levels.

Nutrients which do not lower the protective HDL-cholesterol are the preferred approach to treating cholesterol levels. This is why the debate over butter and margarine is important. It appears that the polyunsaturates in margarine lower HDL levels. In addition, they can apparently suppress the immune system and have an inclination to promote the development of cancer (i.e. they don't cause cancer directly, but act as co-factors). Consequently, the apparent benefits of monounsaturated fatty acids are being investigated, since they do not lower HDL levels as do the polyunsaturates.

Since the polyunsaturates are the basis of the margarine product, the benefits of margarine are now being called into question. Dr William Campbell Douglass, MD, in his booklet, *Eat Your Cholesterol*, made this comment: "Man has been eating meat, fat, and dairy products for thousands of years, but hardening of the arteries is a new disease. My father practiced medicine in Georgia sixty years ago and he rarely saw heart attacks. Coronary heart disease has only become common since the advent of margarine and the massive consumption of vegetable oils.

"The dramatic increase in heart disease in this century has not been accompanied by an increase in animal fat consumption. But there has been a dramatic increase in the consumption of vegetable fats. The traditional fats, dairy and lard (*My Grandma Bell ate lots of lard*), have been replaced by Mazola, Puritan and the other vegetable oils. These oils are 'hydrogenated' into a solid state called margarine. This hydrogen bombardment turns the liquid oil into an unnatural product that nature did not intend and, in experimental animals at least, this solidified oil causes cancer and arteriosclerosis."

Such a testing involves faithful perseverance and patient obedience to the Word of God. The robe of a particular office, like the robe of dominion and authority in general should be conferred by God; it should never be seized, but rather bestowed. This is one reason why God has qualifications for an office — consider the qualifications in I Timothy 3 for a man to be eligible as an elder. Patience, a willingness to await God's time, is an essential mark of true faith.

Marital Ambitions

It is now many years since you realized and delighted in the knowledge that God had given you the gifts of marriage and motherhood, and a very great love of farming and a desire to live in and restore the countryside. Since then God has tested your faithfulness and your willingness to trust Him absolutely and to be totally dependent on Him so that like Abraham, who when he was called, obeyed and by faith "went out, not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8), confident that God would bring to pass His promise in His time and in His way.

God did not and has not asked you to surrender the gift of marriage that he gave you and wishes to bless you with according to His sovereign purposes. Rather, He has asked you to surrender your claim to marriage - or, as you well put it in your letter, to "relinquish this ambition" - and what Mary Pride in her book, *The Way Home: Beyond Feminism, Back to Reality*, has well termed, all the "me-centred" aspects associated with marital ambitions which ultimately reject and pervert God's role for women and His covenant of marriage.

Biblically, your desire to be married is not sinful nor spiritually deficient. It is God's good and gracious gift. What is sinful is the disposition of sin which may be epitomized by the expression so well associated with Oswald Chamber's ministry: "My claim to the right to myself."

Jesus said that "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow" (Matthew 16:24). God has asked you to surrender and sign the death-warrant of your inherited, sinful disposition to use God's good gift of marriage for your purposes and according to your expectations and standards. He has now brought you to the point where you know in your heart and mind that you delight to do His will and desire only to live for Him (II Corinthians 5:15).

You have indeed died to self and gone to the funeral of your own independence over your "ambition" for marriage and over your timing and understanding and use of the marital and maternal gifts that God has granted to you — otherwise, you would not be working in Africa as a missionary begetting new Christians.

But remember Susan, not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. To have

"relinquished this ambition" of marriage does not entail its negation. God has *not* asked you to surrender marriage *per se*. God has very clearly and specially prepared and equipped you to be a farmer's wife and a country mother. God is now ready to bestow on you the office of being a wife and a mother for he knows that you are now ready to faithfully bring forth His abundant and lasting fruit for His glory and eternal purposes.

Adequate Time — Even at 39

Since the Bible affirms that God is in sovereign control over time, and is personally present with man in time, there is adequate and sufficient time for you to be a wife and a mother at 39 years of age. You are not too old to beget new Christians and to lay a foundation in righteousness and wisdom for your great-grandchildren. God has chosen and prepared you to be ready now at 39 — not at 29, nor at 19 years of age.

Again, we should be mindful of the potter and clay analogy. It is the Lord God who opens the womb: "So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went into her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son" (Ruth 4:13).

Consider also Sarah: "Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my Lord being old also?' And the Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, "Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?" Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son'" (Genesis 18:11-15).

Transgenerational Faith

God did fulfil His promise; but Abraham had to learn that patient faithfulness is transgenerational. James B. Jordan has well written in his 1988 draft of a *Biblical Horizons* paper entitled, "Primeval Saints: Studies in the Patriarchs of Genesis," that "By taking Abraham through these trials, God was training him to take a long view — an epic view. He would inherit the land, but only after four hundred years of sojourning outside it, beginning with his move out of Canaan into Philistine territory."

James Jordan goes on to remark, that Abraham would thus "not personally inherit it, but he would have to train his sons, and train them in such a way that they could train their sons for generations (Gen. 18:19). He would have to teach them the Word of God. He would have to establish sound patterns, habits, and rituals for them. And he would have to be near to them, comforting them so that they might learn to comfort others. In short, he would have to be a pastor to his family, and set up patterns of life that would carry down through the gen-

Thus, it seems, "the great butter is better than margarine." Or, if nothing else, the benefits claimed for margarine are still to be established. For those of us who have always preferred "the great butter" over margarine, this is great news. At the same time, it leads us to be cautious about putting faith in some of the claims of the scientists.

* * * *

All the noise over gun control leads us to think there has been a significant increase in homicide in recent years in this country. However, in the decade 1982-92, there has been hardly any increase in the homicide rate. Meanwhile, serious assault has increased by 149%, violent crimes by 121%, fraud by 113%, and robbery is up 90%. Property offences, general theft and motor vehicle theft have increased by 51%, 46% and 51% respectively.

Six Royal Commissions were held during the period (all since 1987) costing an estimated \$100 million. Most of this went to the legal profession.

During the same decade average weekly earnings (AWE) have risen about the same amount as consumer prices, meaning there has been no real increase in AWE provided we only compare AWE with consumer prices. However, marginal tax rates have risen from 30.67% to 39.2% over the period, which means the average Australian (is there such a thing?) is worse off today than he was ten years ago. (But you knew that already, right?)

erations. Such long term patient endurance in well-doing, he knew, would be rewarded."

James Jordan continues, and further remarks, that "Abraham learned to see the entire future of his 'multitude of sons' through the lens of the one son, Isaac. When God called on him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, Abraham went to do so, confident that God would keep his promise and so would raise Isaac from the dead (Gen. 22:5, "we will return to you"). He knew that he had a full quiver even with only one son (Psa. 127). Like the parents of Samson, he knew that it was the quality of his children, not the sheer number of them, that made for a full quiver."

So Susan, take heart and be strong and confident in your Creator and Redeemer King of kings and Lord of lords, and choose to obey Him and to serve Him in the calling for which He has so graciously appointed and equipped you. By all means accept the offer of marriage from your long-standing friend in Australia whom you know God has called to be a covenant-keeping farmer. And by all means go back to Africa as scheduled in March; but go to hand over your work to your successor knowing and delighting therein that your Lord and Saviour has called you home to now bear forth His fruit through you as a farmer's wife and a country mother."

Sincerely, Angus.