

Viewpoint by Victor Knowles



“SEE, HERE IS WATER”

[This month I gladly yield to my friend Tom White, Director, Voice of the Martyrs.]

Over the years, a few of our readers* have been troubled by newsletter photographs of believers being baptized in bathtubs, in the jungle or even in a plastic sheet. One reader stated that these were not “proper” baptisms.

It can be difficult for those of us raised in an established church in the free world to imagine someone being baptized outside of a church building with no significant examination of faith beforehand. However, Christians in the nations we work must practice “heroic adaptation” – finding ways to spread the gospel and grow the Church in hostile situations.

When Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch on the side of the road (Acts 8), the Lord had already prepared the Ethiopian’s heart by leading him to read the prophecies about Jesus. Perhaps the man felt the urgency to be baptized because he didn’t know if he would ever meet another Christian who could baptize him. Consequently, he exclaimed to Philip, “See, here is water.” They stopped the chariot and he was baptized on the spot.

The man would soon be returning to Ethiopia, where Matthew, according to Church history, was nailed to the ground and beheaded under orders from King Hytacus. Although the eunuch was a high-level official in Ethiopia, the practice of following Jesus would be new to Ethiopia when he returned. There would be some initial acceptance, then opposition. So he seized the opportunity to be baptized by Philip.

In areas of severe persecution, some believers still have difficulty finding someone to baptize them. In Egypt and Malaysia, many mainstream church leaders are afraid to baptize a Muslim convert to Christ. They will only baptize those from a non-Muslim background. This situation led two zealous Muslim converts to ride their small motorcycles to the ocean and baptize themselves. They believed they needed to go under water three times, so they got a lot of saltwater in their mouth. But they rejoiced as they sought to be obedient to Christ’s commandments.

My prison cellmate in Cuba, Pastor Noble Alexander, baptized more than 300 prisoners during his more than two

decades in prison. Some of the new believers were baptized in a long sink of hot dishwater when the guards would leave to break up a “fight” – a heroic adaptation. Making use of the primitive means available is not about looking different; it’s about finding a way to obey God. No additional grace is imparted when a baptism occurs outside a church building. But the additional resolve required for new converts to place themselves in potentially deadly situations is marvelous. They are choosing to share in Christ’s reproach “outside the camp” as a sacrifice for our sins (Hebrews 13:13).

I recently witnessed the baptisms of 20 Muslim converts to Christ in a Muslim nation. They had sewn their own baptismal robes. Their exuberance, delight and overflowing joy washed over me like the water pouring off of them. In their country, there is no church building where they could be safely baptized.

Likewise, in the four communist countries of Asia, more than 80 percent of baptisms are illegal because of government restrictions. Believers there have to function “outside the box,” so they are sometimes baptized in a barrel. I am not insulting the traditional church building by calling it a box. Yet we remember that the pilgrims left England because the “box” was too restraining for them. They, too, were forced outside the box.

Brave brothers and sisters in North Africa must practice heroic adaptation in order to live their faith. Believers are baptized in children’s plastic swimming pools, they meet in homes

with the walls knocked out to increase space for worshipers and they hold Christian conversations on trains and buses so others may benefit from overhearing them.

Ministering to the persecuted church means we must understand them. I hope the voices of the persecuted also call you to heroic adaptation and aggressive love. Like the Ethiopian eunuch, they call to us, saying, “See, here is water. Come get wet with us. We are immortal in Christ Jesus. If God be for us, who can be against us?”

* Voice of the Martyrs newsletter, November 2011.

“See, here is water.

What hinders me from being baptized?”

(Acts 8:36)



The Knowlesletter

Celebrating 20 Years (1992 - 2012)

A Monthly Report from Victor & Evelyn Knowles, Founders, Peace on Earth Ministries.
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SEVEN THINGS YOU CAN BANK ON IN 2012

Writing in *Forbes* (online edition, Jan. 12, 2012) Peter Ferrara said, “The record of President Obama’s first three years in office is in, and nothing that happens now can go back and change that. What that record shows is that President Obama, with his throwback, old-fashioned, 1970s Keynesian economics, has put America through the worst recovery from a recession since the Great Depression.” But in spite of today’s troubling economic times here are seven things you can bank on in 2012.

Almighty God is still on His throne. “The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice” (Psa 97:1). “The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble!” (Psa 99:1). “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us glad and rejoice and give Him glory” (Rev 19:6-7). God is in charge so let Him be in charge of your heart, emotions, and actions.

The Bible remains the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God. It is our only rule of faith and practice. It is the “last word” in all we believe and do. Say with David, “I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on Your laws” (Psa 119:30). Determine that you will delve into His Word in 2012.

Jesus of Nazareth is still the Christ, the Son of the living God. I made that Good Confession on June 22, 1958, as have millions of martyrs and legions still living. Christ is the only way to salvation (Acts 4:12) and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Jesus is alive and He dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17). Live in His presence daily. Walk and talk with Jesus like the two men did on the road to Emmaus.

The Church, contrary to rumors and innuendo, is alive and well. I am so glad to be a part of a divine institution of which the Gates of Hell cannot prevail (Matt 16:18). The Church is the bride of Christ and woe be to those who “bash the bride.”

The Holy Spirit is still at work in the church and the world. He has not been recalled or removed from His work of indwelling, empowering and comforting the people of God (John 14:26) or convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment to come (John 16:8). “Let Him have His way with thee.”

The Christian life remains the best way to live. Although Christians are mocked and ridiculed daily by skeptics and unbelievers, living the Christian life is the happiest, healthiest, and holiest lifestyle possible (John 15:11; 3 John 2; Rom 12:1). Don’t let the sinful lifestyles of “the rich and famous” deter you from living the Christian life.

There is yet a Heaven to gain and a Hell to shun. Because “our citizenship is in heaven” we know where we are going. Jesus said, “If it were not so, I would have told you” (John 14:2). And He has told us plenty about hell as well (Matt 25:30, 46). The good news remains: God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:9). Take time to think about Eternity every day.

I believe these are seven powerful and unchanging things you can bank on in 2012.



WINTER CONFERENCE IN ARIZONA



What a joy it was for me to be with Dr. Jack Martin and the Community Christian Church in Apache Junction for yet another Winter Bible Conference on January 8-10. This was my fifth time to be with this 900-member congregation that is nestled at the foot of the Superstition Mountains. I spoke five times in three days and nights on the theme “Beyond the Stars: Our



(Traveling spiritual “Route 66” with Victor in his 66th year of life)

FEB 27-29
OCC Convention, Joplin, MO

MAR 21-24
Tulsa Workshop, Tulsa, OK

MAY 1-4
Bible Lectures
Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA

JUN 23-24
All-School Goldfield High School Reunion
Goldfield, IA

JUN 29 – JUL 1
Midwestern Heritage
Homecoming II
Ottumwa, IA

JUL 10-13
North American Christian
Convention
Orlando, FL

JUL 15
First Christian Church
Winter Park, FL

Home in Heaven." Each night I answered questions that people handed in to me from the previous session. We had wonderful crowds, the music and singing was outstanding, and the overall spirit was simply great. Brother Martin always does such a professional job of promoting and advertising the conference. I was fighting a head cold most of the time but my voice held up pretty well in spite of it all. Maybe it was all that sunshine, orange juice, and green tea! I can't say enough for the office help – **Teresa and Jessica Pugh** and **Nancy Bakken** – who greatly aided me throughout the week. There are many "snowbirds" who attend this conference and I was glad to meet friendly folks all week long from faraway places like Alaska, Canada, and North Dakota. My final message was "Your First Day in Heaven." Scores of people dedicated themselves on the final night that they would not miss heaven for the world!

TOP 25 INDIVIDUAL GIVERS IN 2011

Jerry & Nancy Perry, Carthage, MO
Estate of Sarah McGuire
Anonymous, Centralia, MO
Dr. Jack & Mareese Robbins, Carthage, MO
Phil & Carol Sheldon, Troutdale, OR
Barbara Smith, Carthage, MO
Dale & Shelly Henderson, Cozad, NE
James & Jane Davis, Palestine, TX
Justin & Emily Martin, Anna, TX
Chris & Shirley Heine, Cozad, NE
Lyman & Lori Lalk, Council Bluffs, IA
Fern Marriott, Vancouver, WA
Lloyd Jones, Winchester, KY
Bob & Barb Deitz, Carthage, MO
Pearl Hall, Mooreland, OK
Susan Babcock, Creighton, NE
Don & Ione Fleenor, Carmichael, CA
Jim & Mary Hodge, Dallesport, WA
Jimmy & Marilyn Custer, Nowata, OK
Lee & Bonnie Hoskins, Kimball, MN
Michael Nelson, Bettendorf, IA
Gary & Dianne Smith, Ft. Worth, TX
Evelyn Sayles, Ashland, OR
Steve & Cheryl Sheldon, Hamburg, IA
Dwaine & Delores Couch, Coldstream, BC, Canada

We are truly grateful for *everyone* who gave to Peace on Earth Ministries in 2011.

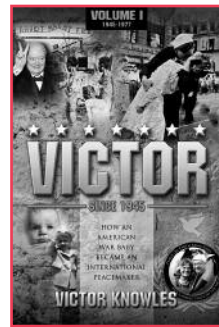
TOP 25 CONGREGATIONAL GIVERS

Rock Port Church of Christ, Rock Port, MO
Severn Christian Church, Severn, MD
New Heights Church of Christ, Connersville, IN
Fairview Christian Church, Carthage, MO
Scottdale Church of Christ, Scottdale, PA
Wentzville Christian Church, Wentzville, MO
Southside Christian Church, Campbellsville, KY
Lerado Church of Christ, Williamsburg, OH
Churchill Meadows Christian Church, Mississauga, ON, Canada

CrossRoads Christian Church, Salinas, CA
Oak Forest Church of Christ, Brookville, IN
Christ's Church, Ft. Morgan, CO
Crocker Christian Church, Crocker, MO
Clear Lake Church of Christ, Springfield, IL
Crossroads Church of Christ, Portland, OR
Villa Heights Christian Church, Joplin, MO
Westwood Christian Church, Madison, WI
Worthington Christian Church, Worthington, MN
Bethel Christian Church, Fountain City, IN
First Christian Church, Knoxville, IA
Two Timbers Church of Christ, Oskaloosa, IA
Coos Bay Church of Christ, Coos Bay, OR
Maple Park Christian Church, Wagoner, OK
Topeka Church of Christ, Topeka, KS
Harvester Christian Church, St. Charles, MO

We are so thankful for *every* congregation who sent support to POEM in 2011.

"WHAT A TERRIFIC READ!"



"I just finished reading *Victor* and what a terrific read! I was transported all over the place and in memory I was taken back to many wonderful people that we both knew and to places we'd both been. I have marveled at your being able to do so much detail with a memory that only God could have given you. If you kept a journal or log, you still had to put the "scenery" with it. Awesome."
— **Letha Lu Solliday, Council Bluffs, IA**

You can get your signed copy of *Victor: Since 1945* for \$22.95, postpaid, from POEM, P. O. Box 275, Joplin, MO 64802. While supplies last.

At long last I have finished writing Volume 2 of *Victor: Since 1945*. Our son **Lincoln** is proofing and our graphic designer **Brett Lyerla** is formatting the book. The plan is to have *Victor 2* ready for the Pepperdine University Bible Lectures May 1-4.

Marlo & Jim Chapman are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary Feb. 26 and would enjoy hearing from their friends at jimarlo@aol.com or (360) 260-9584.

"WITH THE LORD"

Gordon Thompson, Eugene, OR, labored in Puerto Rico for 20 years and then for another 20 years in the Dominican Republic. From the DR he sent mailings and made radio broadcasts into Cuba. Gordon was a tireless worker for Christ and a strong encourager to me in this ministry. Our condolences to his good wife **Erma**. **George Tietze**, 96, Phoenix, AZ, was a fellow student with my father at Minnesota Bible College. He, too, always had a word of encouragement for me whenever we met.

SONGS FROM MY YOUTH

Each month this year I plan to share a song that has impacted my life. First up, "CHRIST FOR ME"

*Christ for me, yes it's Christ for me,
He's my Savior, my Lord and King;
I'm so happy I shout and sing;
Christ for me, yes it's Christ for me,
Every day as I go my way it is Christ for me!* (Alex Burns, 1941)

WE'VE GOT MAIL!

First check of the New Year and as always excited to give to a ministry that is both domestic and international. **Peter & Linda Eggebrecht, Kansas City, MO** • Many thanks to the entire staff for your dedication to the unity of the Word and saving the lost. **Don Burton, Ft. Dodge, IA** • From *Pillar* to post ... your writing is "the most!" **Joe Buckles, Culver, OR** *Joe published some of my earliest writings in his paper "The Pillar."* • Thanks for writing the book (*Victor*) and sharing so many memories of Mike. I have enjoyed it very much. Thank you, too, for all that you do to bring peace to the brotherhood. **Judy Gibson, Nevis, MN** • I love your paper – often I read it 100 times. I then send it to someone else! **Polly Mullen, Lafayette, IN** • May God grant you good health and blessings in your ministry for the coming New Year and always. **Darlene Belle, Sandy, OR** • Congratulations on 20 years with POEM. Lots of us are glad you stepped out on faith. Thanks also for the years with *One Body*. Glad to see Jim Tune will be working with you. He's a breath of fresh air in the church planting/church growth world - looks forward with faith and vision, but doesn't forget (or renounce) where he/we came from. But VK 66 years old? Say it ain't so, Joe! **Tom Claibourne, Winchester, OH** • At last I'm finally into *Victor*! You write with excitement. That's the only way Victor and Evelyn know how to live! When we only go around once might as well if it our best shot! **Don Bayse, Watertown, SD** • Hope you have a great year. We always look forward to *The Knowlesletter*. * **Don & Dorothy Hart, Pittsburg, MO**

MEMORIAL GIFTS
"THE MEMORY OF THE JUST IS BLESSED" – PROVERBS 10:7
IN MEMORY OF
CARL BOWERS Dave & Betty McCoy
LOIS HARRIS Pearl Hall
DALE V. KNOWLES & ED McSPADDEN
Leroy & Roxann Brennfoerder
WARREN & GLADYS McDOWELL
David & Kristen Tyree
JERROLD SCHROEDER & SHARON PRATER
Kevin & Marcia Koch
IN HONOR OF
DR. JACK & MAREESE ROBBINS
Jerry & Nancy Perry

RELIGION OR RELATIONSHIP?

by Evelyn Knowles



You've probably seen them. Billboards or church signs that say, "It's not religion but a relationship" or "Losing my religion." I've even heard some Christians say that Jesus hates religion!

I admit many wrongs have been done under the guise of religion, and religious rites are sometimes performed by rote. Surely that does not make all religion taboo.

What is religion anyway? The Greek word *threskeia* means the outward expression of spiritual devotion. How can that be wrong when James did say our faith should be accompanied by action? "...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17).

What Jesus had a problem with was not religion itself, but religious hypocrisy. In Matthew 6 Jesus addresses praying, giving, and fasting – all of which are outward expressions of faith. Did Jesus hate those things? Absolutely not! He taught and practiced all of them Himself. What displeased Him was that they were being done only to be noticed for one's piety; appearing to honor God but secretly hoping to receive that honor for themselves. Many of the Pharisees were more in love with their religious practices than they were with their Lord. Not good!

Another instance of religious hypocrisy is found in Matthew 23:23, where Jesus sternly rebuked the Pharisees. Not because they meticulously tithed their herbs and spices, but because they neglected the more important matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness. He informed them, "You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former..." So it's not either/or ("It's a relationship, not a religion") but both. Religion without relationship is incomplete, and relationship without religion is also deficient.

James enlightens us about two kinds of religion. One is worthless. The other is pure and faultless and accepted by God. "James makes a distinction between the sham and the reality of religious expression (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary). "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father is accepts as pure and faultless is this: too look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:26-27).

True appreciation for God's gift of redemption compels the redeemed to commit to Him both our hearts (relationship) and our service (religion). Let's see to it that both are pure in God's sight.

"Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." - George Washington

