



# News from the Blue Ridge

Claire & Lorin Cranford



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## Family Events:

Christmas this year had some very special experiences. Donald, Hallie, and the kids spent the better part of three days with us, Dec. 19-21, as a stop-over on their trip to Texas for Christmas. We had a fun time together with family on Friday evening with Angie's family joining us. That set the stage for Christmas.

Claire and I had planned to attend the Christmas eve service at the Deutsche Kirche in Charlotte that I had helped get started back down the way. But heavy rain and bad driving conditions prevented us. But we were able to attend the Christmas eve service at our church, FBC of Shelby. The service was extremely meaningful. In fact, the entire Advent Celebration services through the month of December have been very wonderful worship experiences. It reminded me of Advent Celebration at Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, as well as my earlier experiences in churches in Germany. No Baptist church anywhere in the US celebrates Christmas with the same depth of meaning as Broadway Baptist Church. I have missed those experiences over the past several years. But our minister of music at Shelby is developing a style of worship that is one of the most profound experiences of worship that I've participated in over the past several years.

Christmas eve was climaxed with Angie and Claire baking cookies etc. in the tradition that has been followed for many, many years in the family. Unfortunately, Brian was sick over both these days and unable to join in with everyone. Angie and the kids came back over Christmas day to open gifts and to eat lunch with us. The excitement of the grandkids opening gifts, playing with new toys etc. is what makes Christmas so special.

One of the neatest aspects of the celebration was the very relaxed way we approached it. No hectic schedule; a very flexible time for doing things. Afternoon naps on both Christmas eve and Christmas day! Lots of fun and laughter. Very special times of worship. A lot of good food. No one up tight frantically trying to get everything done. This Christmas was very special for both Claire and me. Hopefully, it sets a pattern for coming years.

Plus, my health enabled me to resume setting up the extensive Christmas decorations outside. Added to the past decorations was the 8 feet tall inflatable Frosty the Snowman. Each evening at dusk, he would come to life -- when the timer turned on the electric fan inside him -- and then about midnight he would collapse. Everyone coming into our edition was greeted in the evenings with this massive dis-



## University Happenings:

The spring semester looms larger and larger on the horizon with the beginning of classes on Jan. 8. The schedule is much more relaxed for this spring than was the fall semester. Only four course preparations instead of six, and these are courses that I've taught repeatedly over the past thirty years. Consequently, I'm looking forward to the semester with greater enthusiasm.

I plan to make some real advances on the web development of Cranfordville.com this spring. A new contract this fall with Bell South Web Hosting gives me massive amounts of space for materials, as well as some advanced features in interactive internet structure. The traffic into cranfordville.com now is approaching 600 people weekly on a consistent basis. A lot of new features are in the making in order to make the web site more attractive and useful.

I want to get more serious about the commentary on Galatians in the [Biblical Insights series](#) that will be posted on the web page, as well as [make a major advancement in the NT bibliography](#) materials posted. The first pericope of Gal. 1:1-5 is about 60% complete with close of fifty pages of commentary etc. Writing a detailed commentary that attempts to address a wide range of needs is extremely time consuming, but is also a very enriching experience. Once this pericope is posted I'll alert everyone and seek some feedback on how it can be improved.

I'm also looking forward to a new experience later in the spring semester. Danny West, the director of the [Center for Congregational Enrichment](#) in the div school, asked me to teach a six week course on Thursday evenings on the book of James. Offered through the [Lay Institute of Religion](#), this course is targeted toward lay people in the area who want to enhance their understanding of scripture and their religious faith. By the end of January, a web page for the course will be posted at Cranfordville.com. The course runs from March 13 through April 17.

play. Although Claire teases me about it, I really don't have aspirations to top Tim the Toolman.

The holidays were capped off by spending some delightful time with Brian, Angie and the kids in a mountain cabin near Saluda, NC -- some fifty miles west of us. We went up on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 29, and came back on Tuesday.



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## ☺ Claire's Musings:

Jan., 2003

Our Christmas Holidays were wonderful. Donald, Hallie and kids, Brittany, Preston, and Trevor were traveling from Virginia to Texas and stopped by our house for a couple of days. We celebrated Christmas and had a fantastic visit. We were very thankful that we were able to spend this special time together. Angie and family came over too, and our house was full of lots of hyper kids and laughter. How perfect!!



After Christmas Angie, Brian, Clay, and Taylor spent some time at a cabin in the mountains. Lorin and I went up there Sunday evening and stayed until Tuesday morning. It was a cozy little cabin, but just big enough for all of us. We had fires in the fireplace and

walks in the woods. I hope we get to go back again some day.

Lorin gave me a very nice digital camera for Christmas, a Sony DSC-F717. I have been taking more and more pictures, especially of the grandkids and the beautiful N.C. scenery. Hopefully this will save in the long run. For me photography has turned into a great hobby (although expensive). I hope to pursue this more in the future, maybe with some photography classes, but I need to finish my master's classes first. There are so many things I want to do, but there's just not enough time.



I made a white angel's dress along with white feathered wings I found and I had a photo definitely looked hope to use these grandchildren and pictures. I have for future photo limits will delay Meanwhile I will fun learning how to use my new camera.



dress to use as an with white-feather at a store. Taylor session and she like a little angel. I props with other take more angels lots of other ideas sessions, but time most of those ideas. continue having

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of God, Savior.' [I= Ἰησοῦς" (Iesous); C = Χριστοῦ" (Christos); Q = θεοῦ" (Theos); U = υἱοῦ" (huios); S = σωτηρ (Soter)]. The word ichthys meant 'fish.' Thus early Christians, under persecution especially, by visually drawing the outline of a fish with their index finger could confess themselves as Christians.

All of this underscores the importance of correct belief in early Christianity. Additionally, the importance of oral repetition of these can be seen, especially in our worship experiences. But the NT confessions also clearly affirm that correct belief is centered on the basics of Jesus Christ. Move very far beyond that in your demands for doctrinal correctness and you have moved beyond where Jesus and the apostles were. Later developing creedalism illustrates the danger of degenerating Christianity into the muck of religious legalism that Jesus deeply opposed. Christian faith became correct belief, not personal commitment to Jesus Christ.



## ✌ Lorin's Musings:

This month we resume the discussion of interpretative strategies for understanding the Bible. In the November issue, the topic of Ancient Hymns as a part of early Christian worship liturgy was summarized.

Another recognizable piece of early Christian tradition was a confession of faith, or creed. I use the terms interchangeably here, although in modern times a significant distinction does exist between these two terms at the point of binding authority upon individuals by a Christian group. The role of the Baptist Faith and Message, especially the latest revision, is a subject of highly charged debate among Southern Baptists today. Historically, Baptists have vigorously rejected creeds but have adopted confessions of faith as nonbinding statements of common belief. The right-wing element of current Southern Baptists have moved away from this, toward making the Baptist Faith and Message the mandatory standard of belief for everyone using the title Southern Baptist. National denominational employees are required to sign pledges of compliance. Increasingly, some state conventions and local associations, as well as some congregations, are following suit with Texas and Virginia being the two most notable exceptions.

In early Christianity with its orientation toward oral memorization of materials, one means of affirming apostolic belief in Jesus Christ was the repetition of memorized confessions of faith during worship. Frequently, these were closely tied to the baptismal service. The difference, however, between a confession of faith and a hymn in early Christianity is not great. The confession of faith summed up Christian belief, while the hymn expressed praise of God. Sometimes the Greek verb translated as 'confess' (ὁμολογῶ , kt.l. ) introduces these.

These confessions differed in length, but were all centered on belief in Christ. Rom. 10:9 is the shortest, "Jesus is Lord" (κύριον ἰησοῦν). Often the confession of Jesus centered on acknowledgment of Him as the Messiah or Christ (e.g., Mk. 8:29; Acts 17:3, 18:5, 1 John 5:1); as the Son of God (Acts 9:20); as Lord (Acts 10:36; 11:20; Rom. 10:9); as having come in the flesh (1 John 4:2), as having died (1 John 2:2; 1 Cor. 11:26); as having been resurrected (1 Cor. 15:3-5).

More developed expressions can be found in passages like 1 Tim. 3:16, "He (Jesus) was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory." Also note 1 Cor. 15:3-5, "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." In the Praescriptio of Romans (1:3-4) a confession of faith is found summarizing the essence of the Christian gospel: "the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,..."

Christologically oriented hymns also were confessions of faith, such as those found in Phil. 2:6-11, Col. 1:15-20, 1 Pet. 3:18-22, and Rev. 5:12.

Sometimes, OT affirmations of belief are found in the NT, such as confession of the oneness of God in Jas 2:19 (=Deut. 6:4), of the holiness of God as in Rev. 4:8 (=Isa. 6:3).

Christians after the end of the first century developed the acronym ICQUS (ichthys) which stood for 'Jesus Christ, Son