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## **JOURNEYERS -- NOT WANDERERS, ROAMERS, OR EXPLORERS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In this little paper, I shall discuss the English words "wander," "roam," "explore," and "journey" in regard to which term most properly describes true Christians as they pass through this life. No attention will be paid to the etymology of these words, nor to the original Hebrew or Greek words from which they were translated when I cite the words as found in the KJV or NIV. I shall consider them only in their various shades of meaning as found in my English Dictionary sources and as are apparent from their uses in the Bible.

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### **PART 1 -- WANDERERS**

A proverb of J. R. R. Tolkien declares: "Not all who wander are lost," but the primary meaning of the word "wander" does seem to separate it from the more intelligent traveling of one who explores or one who journeys. Further, I think that "wandering" is often associated with one who is lost or with one who does not know where he is going.

My Oxford computer dictionary defines "wander" as follows: "1. intr. (often foll. by in, off, etc.) go about from place to place aimlessly. 2. a (of a person, river, road, etc.) wind about; diverge; meander. b (of esp. a person) get lost; leave home; stray from a path etc. 3. talk or think incoherently; be inattentive or delirious. 4. cover while wandering (wanders the world)." The King James Version of the Bible uses the word "wander" in a variety of ways: When Hagar was cast from Abraham's household, she "wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba" (Gen. 21:14). Quite obviously, she did not know where she was going, and had no certain destination. When young Joseph sought his brethren at his father's behest, it is said that "a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?" (Gen.

37:15). Here, Joseph was probably not totally lost, but because he could not fix his destination his meandering was quite aimless, except that he aimed to find his brethren.

In Num. 14:33, the angered Lord said to those who failed to enter Canaan at Kadesh-barnea: "Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms." In this case, the wandering was not that of those who were geographically lost, but of those who were made 40-year-transients with no final dwelling place during that time -- somewhat like today's transients who are not geographically lost, but who constantly wander from place to place, having no fixed dwelling place.

Deut. 27:18 presents a clear case where those who wander are lost: "Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way." The curse was upon those who purposely misled the blind, causing them to miss the way -- causing them to in fact be "lost" in so far as their knowledge of the way was concerned.

Nevertheless, in the very first instance in the KJV where the word "wander" is found there is no real sense in which the one who wandered was lost -- only the fact that he did not know in advance precisely where he was going. That instance is found in Gen. 20:13, where Abraham says, "And it came to pass... God caused me to wander from my father's house..."

Thus, we can see that indeed, "Not all who wander are lost," however, in our primary, modern use of the word, who is there that wishes to be known of as "a Wanderer"? The term does seem to have more of a derogatory connotation than the next 3 words I shall discuss in this little treatise. For long years, English theologians have spoken of "the wandering Jew" in reference to the Diaspora -- the Jews scattered around the globe after the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, many of them are gathered back into Palestine, but perhaps all Orthodox Jews consider the term, "the wandering Jew" to be derogatory. Because of the negative connotation connected with the word "Wanderer" probably few Christians want to be known as such, nor to be known as Meanderers, -- and certainly not as Vagabonds. Those known as Wanderers seem to have a close relationship in our minds to those falling into those two classifications.

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## PART 2 -- ROAMERS

My Oxford computer dictionary defines "roam" as follows: "roam 1. ramble, wander. 2. travel unsystematically over, through, or about. n. an act of roaming; a ramble." Probably we scarcely ever think of a "roamer" as one who is geographically lost, but he certainly may be a traveler without an aim -- a prowler, a rover, or a Rambler. There is no instance in the KJV in which the word "roam" is used. It is used 9 times in the NIV.

The first of these is in Judg. 11:37 where the to-be-sacrificed daughter of the unwise vower, Jephthah says, "But grant me this one request. Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends." The KJV has it, "Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains" Here we see the word "roam" used as a "going up and down" that is a traveling without a fixed destination -- something quite different from the

spiritual travel of a Christian through life, although even saints may become so distraught at times as to be humanly beside themselves and pace up and down the floor or stairs, or even the woods. Elsewhere in the NIV -- I Sam. 30:31 speaks of "places where David and his men had roamed" when avoiding Saul. In Job 1:7 and 2:2, Satan has been "roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." Job 30:3 speaks of those "Haggard from want and hunger" who "roamed the parched land in desolate wastelands at night." Prov. 26:13 relates how a sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets!" Isa. 8:21 says of the distressed and hungry that "they will roam through the land; when they are famished." In Jere. 2:31, the Lord asks, "Why do my people say, 'We are free to roam.'"

Finally, in Jere. 50:6, the Lord laments, "My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray and caused them to roam on the mountains." In all of these instances where the word "roam" is used in the NIV we can see a negative connotation in the word -- revealing a lack of aim and/or guidance, and straying -- things quite different from the saints' travel to "the city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Basically, then, true Christians are not "Roamers," although many who profess to be Christians fall into this category.

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### PART 3 -- EXPLORERS

My Oxford computer dictionary defines the word "explore" thus: "1. travel extensively through (a country etc.) in order to learn or discover about it. 2. inquire into; investigate thoroughly..."

The word "explore" is not found in the KJV, but is found 19 times in the NIV. The first instance is found in Num. 13:2 "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan." The KJV says, "Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan." Here we see quite a difference between a "Wanderer" and an "Explorer," the former traveling aimlessly, but the latter doing a systematic search. In 15 of the 19 instances in which the word "explore" is found in the NIV it refers to the searching out of the land of Canaan by the 12 spies. In two instances it refers to an asserted "spying out" of the land of the Amorites by David. Once it refers to the "spying out" of Eshtaol.

The final use of "explore" in the NIV is found in Eccl. 1:13, where the Preacher says, "I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven." The KJV has it thus: "I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven."

There does seem to be less negative inference in the term "explorer" than in the term "wanderer," but again, probably few Christians want to be called an "explorer". It is a term they would probably feel quite comfortable in applying to Christopher Columbus, to Lewis and Clark, and to their ilk, but one who is making his way to heaven is likely to consider his trip as something quite beyond "exploration". An "explorer" may be one who has no fixed destination, and that certainly does not apply to the saint of God. An "explorer" may be nothing more than one who delights in discovering heretofore unseen places, or, he may be nothing more than a "prospector" in search of earthly gold and treasurer. Bill Gates' web browser program is called the Internet

Explorer, but there are vast "continents" on the Net which no Christian has the desire to "explore" while myriad who do venture with delight into these realms might well be labeled "explorers" but who could in no wise be accurately labeled as Christians.

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## PART 4 -- JOURNEYERS

The Oxford Dict. defines the verb "journey" thus: "1. an act of going from one place to another, esp. at a long distance." One-hundred-seven times in the KJV, we find some form of the word "journey" used. Here is a one instance: "And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel" (Num. 10:29). In Luke 13:22 we find these words about Jesus: "He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem."

The travel of the Christian through life toward the heavenly city is like that of a stranger and pilgrim who is purposely "journeying" to the promised land. He is not wandering; he is not roaming; he is not exploring; HE IS JOURNEYING. His steps are measured; his steps are guided; his progress is continual, like that of Christ who "when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," (Luke 9:51), and His steps were those of a Journeyer "journeying toward Jerusalem."

The Christian Journeyer does not wander, for he knows where he is going; he has a fixed goal. A Journeyer does not roam up and down, back and forth, or take tangents off of his path, for he has no time to waste. He is not a Meanderer nor a Dallyer in willy-nilly fashion who has no concern about his progress nor the time expended in his travels. The Christian Journeyer does not explore the land to the left and right of his assigned way; he has no desire to know all there is to know about everything and every place in this world. Instead, the Christian Journeyer follows the injunctions of Prov 4:25-27 "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."

The worldly Wanderer, the Roamer, and the Explorer, may all, to some extent, be "Foot-loose and Fancy Free," but the sainted spiritual Journeyer is a man, a woman, a boy, or a girl, with a definite goal, a controlled step, a fixed gaze, a deep-seated determination, and a continual progress toward Heaven. They readily confess that they are "strangers and pilgrims in the earth" and "declare plainly that they seek a country." They glory not in any earthly ancestry, in any earthly race, nor in any earthly nation. Ask them of such and they will tell you that "truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned -- But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly" and that "wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:13-16).

These triumphant spiritual Journeyers have inwardly heard the Divine promise of Isa. 33:17 "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." With quickened pace they stalwartly press forward to the finish line where faith shall be made

sight and where theirs shall be the testimony of John the Beloved, who said: "I.. saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:2-4).

Theirs even now are sentiments like those of the saintly Adam Clarke, who about two years before his translation wrote: "I have enjoyed the spring of life; I have endured the toils of its summer; I have culled the fruits of its autumn:-- I am now passing through the rigors of its winter: and I am neither forsaken of God, nor abandoned by man. I see at no great distance the dawn of a new day; the first of a spring that shall be eternal. It is advancing to meet me! I run to embrace it. Welcome, eternal spring! Hallelujah!"

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THE END